



Foundation Holds First Board Meeting of 2026; Elects New Officers.

The Meat Foundation Board of Directors met on January 15 to review 2025 programs; plan for 2026 and elect new officers. In 2025, the Foundation funded eight post harvest beef safety research projects through its contract with the Beef Checkoff; an environmental sciences study focused on pork carbon claiming and a project focusing on *Salmonella* ecology and colonization in market hogs with its partnership with the National Pork Checkoff. More than \$1.5 million of research was funded through these programs. Additionally, the Foundation awarded 11 scholarships totaling \$110,000 in 2025.

The Meat Foundation intends to release a request for proposals in spring 2026 to address knowledge gaps in beef and pork safety. Additionally, the Board approved a new scholarship structure with an earlier timeline. The Meat Foundation will award ten scholarships in 2026 totaling \$100,000. Five thousand dollars will be awarded for the Gustafson, Piccetti, Powers, DeBenedetti, Mucklow, and Duyn scholarships; \$10,000 will be awarded to two graduate and undergraduate merit scholarship winners; and \$15,000 will be awarded to one graduate and undergraduate winner of the Barry Carpenter scholarship. Applications will be open from February-April 1 with winners announced in August. Please visit www.MeatFoundation.org/Scholarships to learn more.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Meat Foundation elected new officers for two year terms. Kirby Childs, Ph.D., Vice President of Quality Assurance and Technical Resources of Greater Omaha Beef Packing Co. Inc., was elected as Chair of the Board. Meredith Healan, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, FPL Food LLC, was elected as Vice Chair of the Board. Al Almanza, JBS Foods, was elected as Immediate Past Chair.

“The Meat Foundation is grateful for the leadership of Mr. Almanza,” said Foundation President Susan Backus. “Al chaired the organization through its merger with the Meat Institute’s Scholarship program forming a new organization to advance continuous improvement for the meat and poultry industry across research, education, and scholarships. His leadership and dedication to the industry and to future leaders of the industry is appreciated.”



Immediate Past Chair Al Almanza receiving a plaque recognizing his service and leadership to the Meat Foundation from newly elected Chair, Kirby Childs.

2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

On January 7, the Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture released [the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans \(DGAs\)](#). The DGA's main message is to eat real food. The Secretaries of HHS and USDA write in the introduction that "American households must prioritize diets built on whole, nutrient-dense foods – protein, dairy, vegetables, fruits, healthy fats, and whole grains. Paired with a dramatic reduction in highly processed foods laden with refined carbohydrates, added sugars, excess sodium, unhealthy fats, and chemical additives, this approach can change the health trajectory for so many Americans."

The DGAs outline the following themes: Eat the Right Amount for You; Prioritize Protein Foods at Every Meal; Consume Dairy; Eat Vegetables & Fruits Throughout the Day; Incorporate Healthy Fats; Focus on Whole Grains; Limit Highly Processed Foods, Added Sugars & Refined Carbohydrates; Limit Alcoholic Beverages; and Special Populations and Considerations. It also includes callout boxes on added sugars and sodium.

The New Pyramid was also unveiled as a simple guide to help Americans eat whole foods more consistently, prioritizing nutrient-dense foods.

More information on the Dietary Guidelines and Pyramid are available at www.realfood.gov/ and www.dietaryguidelines.gov/.

Register for Webinar Exploring Historical Analysis and Trends Surrounding *Salmonella*.

Join USDA and university experts for a practical look at what decades of data reveal about *Salmonella* risk in beef. Learn how regional patterns, recurring serovars, and modern genomic tools can help better target monitoring and control efforts— and where today's surveillance still has limits.

[Register now](#) for actionable insights your food safety team can use today.



Historical Analysis of *Salmonella*:

Trends in Outbreaks, Genomics, and Geographic Factors

FEBRUARY 24 AT 2:00 PM ET



FSIS Held Public Meeting on *Salmonella* Reduction in Poultry Products.

On Jan. 14, USDA and FSIS leaders convened a hybrid public meeting to discuss practical strategies for reducing *Salmonella* illnesses attributed to poultry products, which drew more than 350 participants and 36 oral comments from across industry, academia, government, and consumer groups, highlighting broad engagement. Under Secretary Mindy Brashears outlined a clear vision for the work ahead and emphasized that meaningful reductions in *Salmonella* illnesses will require a broader lens than just focusing on poultry. She stressed the importance of tailored strategies rather than relying on one-size-fits-all solutions, and highlighted innovative tools like biomapping and environmental mapping to identify high-risk areas in facilities. More details and resources from the public meeting are available on [FSIS's website](#).

Pilot Project Opportunity Open to Pork Industry.

While packers, processors and the entire pork supply chain have invested in strengthening environmental performance, documenting the journey from field to facility, and building confidence with customers and stakeholders about responsible production, they also face expectations for continued improvement.

Recognizing that challenge, the Meat Foundation with support from Meat Institute convened pork industry partners to design a **practical solution: a greenhouse gas reduction framework and support data infrastructure that enables high-credibility carbon asset value creation**. This approach can create value in three unique ways: (1) Internal reporting of verified GHG reductions; (2) An optional pathway to mass-balanced claims, and (3) An optional path to marketable carbon asset value, enabling participation in emerging ecosystem markets without new practices or capital investment. These options are flexible, allowing each company to choose what best aligns with its strategic direction.

The Pilot Opportunity, Partners Welcome

The project is designed around a **light-lift pilot** to prove out the framework and the data infrastructure and research market readiness for scaling opportunities. The pilot is designed to be **simple and accessible for pork packers/processors of all sizes** whether they operate integrated systems, contract grower networks, or independent supply chains.

Participation requires **no new data collection, no changes in production or sourcing practices, and no new interventions or added costs**. Instead, participants share a minimal set of existing production flow data to allow the framework to validate reductions against the industry baseline. The goal is to remove barriers and build confidence—not add complexity.

While the wider framework can be applied across interventions, this first pilot is designed to account for reductions already occurring within normal production systems and to translate those into credible, market-recognized carbon asset value. Participating companies can expect approximately 7.5% reductions in emissions attributable to their sow herd without practice changes. This is the first opportunity to test the framework with real-world data.

Interested in Participating?

For more information or to discuss participation, please contact: **Sam Wildman**, Strategic Projects Director, Meat Institute at swildman@meatinstitute.org.

Current Foundation Research Projects

Understanding *Salmonella* ecology and internal colonization in market hogs, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Arkansas

This study will use barcoded *Salmonella* to inoculated market hogs orally, intranasally, and at various locations intradermally to explore *Salmonella* ecology and internal colonization in market hogs. The findings are intended to address the following research questions: How quickly does *Salmonella* contaminate lymph nodes, tonsils, liver, spleen, cecal contents, and feces of market hogs?; and Does inoculation method (oral vs. intradermal) impact frequency and concentration of *Salmonella* recovered from inoculated market hogs?

Funded in part by the Pork Checkoff.



Survival of African swine fever in pork and processed pork products, Canadian Food Inspection Service, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

African Swine Fever (ASF) is a contagious, haemorrhagic viral disease of pigs that is currently spreading westwards throughout Europe and eastwards into China, with significant economic losses along its path. While strict regulatory guidelines are in place to prevent the spread of this virus, little is known about the effectiveness of current meat processing methods in inactivating ASF. In addition, the matrix effect of individual meat products and ingredients on ASF survival is not well documented. This project aims to explore the survival of ASF in different meat products from ASF infected pigs as well as investigate the effect of different ingredients, cooking temperature, storage time and high pressure processing on ASF inactivation in different meat model systems.

Funded in part by the National Pork Checkoff under an ASF Partnership and administered by the Foundation.



Carbon Accounting for Genetic Progress in Pork, Kearney (formerly Context Network)

The project intends to demonstrate the market readiness for value creation to occur utilizing credible accounting for genetic progress within pork systems. The demonstration will advance the infrastructure and market research needs that inform future scalability for the industry to use this approach. Findings will enable pork packers/processors to leverage these innovations to manage their environmental footprint and business goals by incentivizing productivity and efficiency.

Funded in part by PIC.



Salmonella deep serotyping and microbial community profiling through swine production and processing, USDA-ARS-MARC, University of Georgia, Texas Tech University

This study will investigate the implementation of effective interventions at the most appropriate points in swine production, as well as deepen the understanding of *Salmonella* serotype diversity and complexity at all stages of production. This study will use archived samples of swine finishing barns as well samples collected under currently funded work, for CRISPR-SeroSeq and microbiome analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the microbiome and *Salmonella* serotype ecology from farm to fork.

Funded in part by the Pork Checkoff.



Current Foundation Research Projects, *continued*

Characterizing *Salmonella* Isolates from Ground Beef in the United States, Texas Tech University, Kansas State University, University of Georgia, USDA-ARS, Meat Animal Research Center, Food Safety Net Services

It is hypothesized that *Salmonella* serotypes and presence of highly pathogenic *Salmonella* (HPS) in ground beef will vary by geographic location and season depending on the facility. Samples obtained from a separate study will be analyzed to determine the *Salmonella* serotype(s) present in each positive sample and the presence of HPS associated with U.S. ground beef.

Funded in part by the Beef Industry Food Safety Council.



Revealing mechanisms for internal *Salmonella* colonization and persistence in porcine lymphoid and fat tissue, USDA-ARS-NADC - Food Safety and Enteric Pathogens Research Unit

Swine can become persistently infected with *Salmonella*, shedding little to no bacteria in the feces, until subjected to a stressful event, which increases fecal shedding. A clear understanding of the mechanisms of *Salmonella* persistence in porcine immune cells is needed to develop targeted intervention strategies to significantly reduce *Salmonella* carriage in swine and the risk of contamination of products and the environment. The overall hypothesis is that *Salmonella* resides in myeloid-lineage cells in porcine lymphoid tissues and fat, and subsequently modulates the cellular state to limit bacterial clearance. The objectives of this project are to identify the cell types harboring *Salmonella* in pig lymphoid and adipose tissue at various stages of colonization; characterize the cellular response; and identify mechanisms of intracellular colonization.

Funded in part by the Pork Checkoff.



Funded by the Beef Checkoff and Administered by the Foundation

From Trim to Table: Tracking *Salmonella* Dynamics, Including Levels and Survival, from Beef Trim to Ground Product, Kansas State University and Cargill

This research will conduct an inoculation study to evaluate the influence of *Salmonella* levels in beef trim (including lymph nodes) on *Salmonella* levels in ground beef, providing valuable insights for managing *Salmonella* in final product. *Salmonella* survival will be assessed during standard industry storage periods to further understand its persistence and potential risks in products intended for commerce.



Assessing *Salmonella* status (prevalence, load, pathogenicity, and serotype complexity) through beef processing, University of Georgia and Texas Tech University

This study will integrate four advanced laboratory techniques, e.g. PiLOT, CRISPR-SeroSeq, to improve understanding of *Salmonella* dynamics in beef processing. Specifically, these data and techniques will enable (1) identifying steps in the processing chain which change the *Salmonella* communities either by load or loss or gain of subtypes (serotype, pathogenicity), or both and (2) describing which *Salmonella* subtypes (serotype, pathogenicity) are selected for, or which are lost, during processing steps. Findings will help build the research foundation needed for food safety protocols to produce integrated data sets. This data can then be applied to ensure that proposed regulatory frameworks meaningfully improve beef safety.



Funded by the Beef Checkoff and Administered by the Foundation, *continued*

Rapid identification of ground beef and beef trim samples exceeding a *Salmonella* threshold level, Kansas State University and Cargill

The study will determine the impact of the *Salmonella* inoculation method on various *Salmonella* quantification and limit of detection (LOD) methods. Additionally, the study will determine the reliability and repeatability of various *Salmonella* quantification and LOD methods for the identification of non-intact beef samples harboring *Salmonella* equal to or above a threshold. Findings will address beef industry concerns regarding specific methods.



Effect of organic acid components on the inhibition of *Clostridium perfringens* during extended cooling of uncured meat products and the inhibition of *Listeria monocytogenes* during extended refrigerated storage, University of Wisconsin-Madison Food Research Institute

This research will compare the relative efficacy and synergistic effect of the active components (lactate, propionate, acetate/diacetate) found in clean label growth inhibitors (such as cultured sugar and vinegar-based products) on the inhibition of *Clostridium perfringens* in a model-uncured beef system, with primary focus on extending Phase 1 cooling (120 to 80°F). It will also validate inhibition of *Listeria monocytogenes* during extended refrigerated storage of a model deli meat system formulated with organic acid salts used to control *C. perfringens*.



Targeting Foodborne Pathogens in the Beef Industry through an Integrated Analysis of the Beef Processing System, Texas Tech University, University of Nebraska, U.S. Meat Animal Research Center USDA-ARS, and Auburn University

This research will take a comprehensive approach to targeting *Salmonella* and Shiga Toxin Producing *E. coli* (STEC) conducted through optimization of sampling techniques, microbial detection and microbial quantification methods combined with microbiome and metagenomic analysis to enable mitigation strategies and validation techniques to impact pathogen presence in beef products.



2025 SCHOLARSHIP CONTRIBUTORS

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(*) Indicates multiple contributions

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