



Dr. KatieRose McCullough, PhD, MPH, Elected President of Meat Foundation.

The Meat Foundation announced earlier this month that Dr. KatieRose McCullough, PhD, MPH, will serve as the president and chief scientist of the Meat Foundation, marking the next phase in the organization’s ongoing evolution.

Dr. McCullough previously served as chief scientist for the Meat Foundation and will continue to serve as senior director for science and public health at the Meat Institute. A longtime champion of the Foundation’s mission, she has worked with the Foundation for years to advance initiatives that support student scholarships and fund critical research in food safety, animal welfare, nutrition, worker safety and environmental sustainability.

Dr. McCullough will succeed Susan Backus, who led the Meat Foundation through a successful strategic transformation over the past several years as president, bringing its research and scholarship initiatives together under the leadership of a newly energized Board of Directors. In total, she served the Foundation for 27 years in various roles.

Backus will shift focus to her role as vice president of regulatory and scientific affairs for the Meat Institute, where she will continue to lead the Institute’s health and nutrition advocacy, which has been increasingly critical for the industry as consumers and legislators highlight the importance of human health and nutrition. Backus will also continue serving as executive secretary of the Shelf-Stable Food Processors Association.

“Susan has successfully guided the Meat Foundation through an important strategic evolution over the years,” said **Kirby Childs, Ph.D., Chairman of the Foundation Board**. “Her leadership has strengthened the Foundation’s mission and positioned it for continued success — her impact cannot be understated. We are equally excited for Dr. McCullough to step into this role; her vision and leadership will propel the Foundation into its next chapter with energy and purpose.”

The Meat Foundation and Meat Institute express their appreciation to both leaders for their continued dedication and for taking on expanded responsibilities in support of the industry and its stakeholders.



Dr. KatieRose McCullough, PhD, MPH
President, Meat Foundation

Meat Foundation Scholarship Applications Open Through April 30.

The application window for the Meat Foundation's [2026–2027 scholarship program](#) is open through April 30, with the largest award increasing from \$10,000 to \$15,000. The Foundation will award \$100,000 across 12 merit-based scholarships to exceptional undergraduate and graduate students pursuing careers in the meat and poultry industry and related fields.

Undergraduate Awards

- 1 – \$15,000 Carpenter Scholarship
- 2 – \$10,000 Merit Scholarships
- 1 – \$5,000 DeBenedetti Scholarship
- 1 – \$5,000 Mucklow Scholarship
- 1 – \$5,000 Duyn Scholarship

**Apply as an
Undergraduate Student**

Graduate Awards

- 1 – \$15,000 Carpenter Scholarship
- 2 – \$10,000 Merit Scholarships
- 1 – \$5,000 DeBenedetti Scholarship
- 1 – \$5,000 Mucklow Scholarship
- 1 – \$5,000 Duyn Scholarship

**Apply as a
Graduate Student**

Applications are reviewed by a scholarship committee using a weighted rubric to ensure a rigorous, merit-based selection process. Students must be enrolled at an accredited university and submit department support and a transcript at the time of application. Additional application and eligibility details are available with the links above.

Annual Meat Conference Draws 2,500 Attendees and HHS Secretary.

The [Annual Meat Conference \(AMC\)](#) concluded last month in Oxon Hill, Maryland, after three days of fresh educational programming, product engagement on the show floor, and remarks from multiple high-ranking government officials.

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. addressed the audience and answered questions from Meat Institute President and CEO Julie Anna Potts and FMI President and CEO Leslie Sarasin during the show's opening remarks. Kennedy discussed the importance of meat and poultry in his own personal health and wellness journey, as well as in Americans' diets via the [2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).



Shortly after his remarks, attendees gathered for AMC's marquee session dissecting the latest [Power of Meat report](#). Anne-Marie Roerink with 210 Analytics unpacked the latest consumer trends, purchasing patterns, and sector growth, and explained that despite economic and policy crosswinds, consumers continue to prioritize meat and poultry at the center of the plate. More details are available in this [press release](#).

Finally, **HHS Advisor Calley Means** shared perspectives to the Meat Institute Board of Directors on the growing national conversation around real foods and public health, reinforcing what we've always known: meat and poultry play a vital role in healthy diets and provide essential nutrients to consumers around the world.

FSIS Releases FY 2025 Foodborne Illness Outbreak Investigations Report.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) published its fiscal year [2025 Foodborne Illness Outbreak Investigations Summary Report](#), outlining outbreaks reviewed during the year and the pathogens, products, and recalls involved. The report also highlights lessons learned from after-action reviews conducted following outbreak investigations. Working with public health partners, FSIS investigates outbreaks to determine whether FSIS-inspected meat and poultry products are linked to illnesses and to identify products that should be removed from commerce to prevent further cases. Additional reports and outbreak investigation resources are available on the [FSIS website](#).

Meat Foundation, Meat Institute Migrate Learning Management System to New Platform.

The Meat Foundation and Meat Institute have migrated their Learning Management System (LMS) platform to improve member experience. The new URL to access the platform is academy.meatinstitute.org. You will use the same login credentials to access this platform as the previous one. If you have any questions or concerns, contact events@meatinstitute.org.

Currently, members can access and take the "[Foundations of Listeria Control](#)" course within the LMS. "Foundations of *Listeria* Control" is an online course designed to provide practical, science-based introduction to controlling the pathogen *Listeria monocytogenes* in meat and poultry processing environments. From plant floors to corporate offices, this course is essential for any professional involved in producing ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products.

Register for the Animal Care & Handling Conference.

The [Animal Care & Handling Conference](#) — May 12 - 13 in Kansas City, Missouri — is the only event dedicated to advancing animal welfare and handling practices, particularly within the meat industry's slaughter sector. This unique gathering brings together industry leaders, academics, and practitioners, bridging academic research and real-world application. Unlike other conferences, it encourages open dialogue and shares practical, actionable solutions designed for those working in slaughter operations. Attendees will gain valuable insights, network with peers, and leave equipped with strategies to enhance animal care and handling in their daily practices.



REGISTER NOW

Meat Institute | Meat Foundation

Animal Care & Handling Conference
KANSAS CITY, MO • MAY 12-13, 2026

Meat Foundation, Beef Checkoff Host In-Depth Webinar on *Salmonella* History.

Salmonella continues to be one of the most challenging food safety issues facing the beef industry. On a Feb. 24 webinar, [Historical Analysis of *Salmonella*: Trends in Outbreaks, Genomics, and Geographic Factors](#), Dr. Tatum Katz and Dr. Dayna Harhay of USDA's Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center and Dr. Nikki Shariat and Dr. Tatum Mortimer of the University of Georgia shared what a deep dive into decades of outbreak data, geographic trends, and modern genomic tools reveals about what's really driving *Salmonella* risk today. **The webinar recording can be accessed [here](#).**

The webinar translated complex science into practical, actionable insights food safety and operations teams including:

- **Where to focus:** How regional patterns can guide more targeted monitoring and interventions
- **What to watch:** Which trends in testing data may signal elevated risk
- **How to plan:** Why updating “Serovars of Concern” every two years makes sense
- **What's next:** How advanced genomics and modeling tools can strengthen future control strategies



Historical Analysis of *Salmonella*:
Trends in Outbreaks, Genomics, and Geographic Factors

FEBRUARY 24



RESEARCH

Meat Foundation Provides Update on Beef Checkoff Funded Efforts.

The 2026 CattleCon provided an opportunity for contractors to the Beef Checkoff to share highlights of their efforts on behalf of beef producers. Programmatic efforts on producer communications; industry information; foreign marketing; research; promotion; and consumer information were shared during the Highlights Session on Feb. 3. The Meat Foundation, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, detailed an upcoming webinar featuring research findings from Beef Checkoff supported research as well as other research communications. Additionally, CattleCon is the venue for contractors to provide a deeper dive into their work for FY26.

Newly Completed Research

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. Results from this study indicate lymphoid tissues harbor *Salmonella* after experimental inoculation, but also as soon as five days after exposure to infected pigs. Immunohistochemistry was not a sensitive method to inform *Salmonella* tissue colonization, and instead, culture with enrichment was a more sensitive method of detection in the experiment. In addition, results indicate that the immune response to *Salmonella* was subtle, and detection pathways subverted by *Salmonella* will be difficult to define.

Funded in part by the Pork Checkoff.



Findings from Effect of minimally processed animal protein within the Dietary Guidelines for Americans on biomarkers for cognitive decline, a project funded in part by the Meat Foundation, were recently published in the published in *Current Developments in Nutrition*. The abstract follows and the complete publication is available [here](#).

“Background: Popular dietary patterns for cardiovascular and cognitive health often emphasize limiting red meat intake. However, evidence specifically examining the effects of minimally processed lean red meat, independent of processed varieties, remains limited.

Objectives: This study aimed to evaluate the impact of incorporating minimally processed lean red meat into a plant-forward dietary pattern aligned with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans on markers of age-related cognitive, metabolic, and physical health.

Methods: This 18-wk randomized controlled crossover feeding trial tested a red meat diet with 162 g/d minimally processed pork (MPP) against a macronutrient- and energy-matched no-meat control diet with minimally processed lentils (MPL) in ≥ 65 y older adults. Metabolic biomarkers related to cognitive and physical health were explored. Primary and secondary endpoints comprised 5 cardiovascular markers, 12 nutritional and neurotransmitter measures, and 2 metrics each of body composition and muscular fitness. Data were analyzed with robust mixed-effects models adjusted for covariates.

Results: Thirty-six Midwestern older adults (26/10 females/males; mean age 71.7 y; mean body mass index: 28 kg/m²) completed the study. Cognitive-related metabolic biomarkers improved across both arms. Adoption of the plant-forward diet led to a reduction in fasting insulin after both MPP and MPL phases ($P < 0.001$), and Single Point Insulin Sensitivity Estimator Index increased after MPP ($P = 0.032$), with no significant between-diet differences. High-density lipoprotein concentrations were higher post-MPP than post-MPL ($P = 0.034$). Body weight decreased in both phases ($P < 0.05$), with a trend toward smaller lean mass loss post-MPP. Grip strength and chair-rise performance were maintained throughout the intervention. Neuroactive metabolites and bioactive amino acid concentrations shifted favorably after both interventions.

Conclusions: Findings challenge the perception that red meat is broadly unsuitable for older adults. Including familiar foods like red meat (pork), particularly in minimally processed form and within a healthy overall dietary pattern, may provide age-associated health benefits and improve adherence to plant-forward diets in populations where red meat remains popular.

This trial was registered at clinicaltrials.gov as NCT05581953 (12 October, 2022) and NCT06261775 (7 February, 2024).”

Vaezi, S., de Vargas, B. O., Weidauer, L., Freeling, J. L., & Dey, M. (2025). Effects of minimally processed red meat within a plant-forward diet on biomarkers of physical and cognitive aging: a randomized controlled crossover feeding trial. *Current Developments in Nutrition*, 107615.

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.



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.



Funded by the Beef Checkoff

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

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.



Funded by the Beef Checkoff

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

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.



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As of March 25, 2026

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As of March 25, 2026
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