

Inspector Shortage in Illinois

The IAMP Board of Directors is asking for our membership to contact their Illinois State Senator and Representatives with concerns regarding the inspector shortage in the Department of Meat and Poultry Inspection within the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Points of Discussion

- The IDOA Meat & Poultry Bureau Chief (Dr. Kris Mazurczak) retired as of August 18, 2020. The position was posted and applications were received until September 4, 2020. The hiring of this position was given high priority, but the application review process has been halted by the Illinois Department of CMS (Central Management Services). There has been no action on the hiring of the Bureau Chief position at time of print of this newsletter. Dr. John O'Keefe is the Acting Meat & Poultry Inspection Bureau Chief.
- The IDOA is currently facing vacancies of approximately 14 inspector positions. IAMP has been told those positions won't be hired until the Meat & Poultry Inspection Bureau Chief is hired.
- The approximate 14 inspector vacancies are throughout the State of Illinois. All regions of the state are affected. Some areas have half the number of inspectors needed (Region 4 South).
- Meat & Poultry Inspectors in Illinois are considered "critical workers" and are to be hired without exception.
- Small Meat & Poultry Plants are continually asked to process more livestock, however additional hours of inspection are not available in most circumstances.
- Individuals have applied for these inspector positions. They are told that the applications are being reviewed. This is an ongoing situation.
- We understand that we are in unprecedented times, however the meat supply chain is critical. With the backlog of vacancies, more livestock will be processed without inspection as inspectors may not be available for the large quantity of livestock committed to being processed in Illinois.
- Meat processing plants are essential businesses. For plants to operate and provide meat and meat products to consumers, meat inspectors have to be present to inspect animals and products.

We hope that everyone realizes the major role that small meat processing plants play and appreciate the services they continue to provide during the pandemic and into the future.