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Sent: Wednesday, September 06, 2006 8:18 AM
To: Risk Based Inspection
Subject: Consumer Complaints

I would like to comment about the In Commerce Findings portion of the RBI. The consumer complaints received by the agency in all likelihood represent only a fraction of the consumer complaints that are received by the manufacturer. The first recourse the consumer has when they have a complaint is to contact the manufacturer, mainly because most manufacturers usually have a phone number listed on the product for the consumers to call when they have a complaint. It is normally after the consumer contacts the manufacturer and is dissatisfied with the firm's response that they take the initiative to contact a state or federal agency. Few consumers take the time, or are able to find the phone numbers or websites of the proper agencies in order to report these complaints. Although the bulk of these complaints may be about quality issues or frivolous concerns, many involve issues that are of concern to the agency in determining a company's ability to produce a safe product. I believe that the manufacturers' consumer complaint data base provides perhaps the most accurate model of the companies' in commerce process control problems, but the manufacturers are under no obligation to share this information with inspection personnel or the agency. Possibly the easiest way to gain this information would be to require that amenable products carry a mandatory 800 number for the CCMS on all of their packages that the consumer can contact for safety concerns about the product. Then, the consumer would still have the option to contact the company about quality issues but have a more accessible option to contact the agency with food safety concerns. I believe that both the consumer and the agency would benefit from the information received by allowing an easy link between the consumer and the agency.