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January 27, 2004

FSIS Docket Clerk, Docket 99-017P
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety Inspection Service
Room 102, Cotton Annex, SW.,
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Dear Sirs:

The following comments are submitted to the proposed amendments to the definitions and standards for the official U.S. classes of poultry:

We share the concern of USDA FSIS about accuracy and clarity of labeling. We applaud the intention to modify descriptions to best assure they are truthful and non-misleading. We find, however that the agency has not included for clarification all poultry species under mandatory inspection in this effort, and it should. We also find that in certain cases the changes will result in less accuracy, not more.

1. This regulatory change is the perfect time to correct the error made in 2001 when Congress added two new species (ratite and pigeon). At that time the Department determined that the intent of Congress was to establish a new item based on age, contrary to history of inclusion by species, and contrary to the letter submitted to USDA at the time by the House of Representatives member who initiated the legislation. This omission leads to inconsistent labeling, and confusion as to application of inspection.

In this plant, on more than one occasion, we have had confusion with our inspectors, who felt that they should inspect old pigeons since they have dealt with species as determinants for inspection their entire careers. It is really senseless that only for one species, age is the determinant for inspection, while all others it is species.

Squab should be used to describe a young pigeon in labeling, but not to define inspection amenability similar to the way we do it for all other species. We need to make sure we are clear. The basic fact is that "squab" relates to "pigeon" similar to the way "fryer" or "broiler" relates to "chicken", and in the example of this regulatory change proposal the USDA is proposing to relate Cornish Hen to chicken. We request that included in this regulatory clarification process the species Pigeon replace the age Squab in the regulations to promote consistency and clarity per the intent of the USDA.

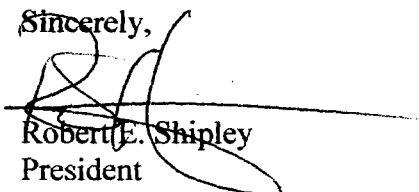
Producers of Quality California Squab

2. Additionally, we request that USDA review the literature (see enclosed *THE POULTRY BUYERS GUIDE*) produced by the North American Meat Processors Association as it applies to usage of the term "Poussin"(see page 15). Since the USDA is attempting have their regulations reflect usage in the poultry industry, it must consider not just the production level, but rather also the market users. In addition to reviewing the industry guide to poultry, we also suggest the agency review virtually every celebrity chef cookbook of recent years to see that reference is made to Poussin for exactly the same bird referenced in the *Buyers Guide*.

The Poussin is generally smaller than the "Cornish Hen" and the recommended changes by the agency actually confuse the issue by allowing industry to call a bird which is not necessarily Cornish, and not necessarily a hen, a Cornish hen. Then the changes virtually eliminate Poussin, which is by itself a description, by such action. Though of french origin, Poussin is listed in virtually all dictionaries relating to gastronomic terminology as a baby, or unfledged chicken (example see *Food Lovers Companion*, by Herbst (pg. 491) or *The Cook's Illustrated Complete Book of Poultry*, by *Cooks Illustrated* (pg.6). To the extent the agency takes the position that this proposed action is to clarify the terms used to describe products as they are actually being used in commerce, consistency and clarity should be the result. In actuality, the proposal, by potentially changing the commonly used term "Poussin, young chicken", to mistruth "Cornish hen" seems questionably reasonable, and does not provide a solution to clarity when the term Poussin is generally being used in the culinary industry. Poussin should describe the next younger bird than the Cornish hen if we have to keep the inaccurate term "Cornish Hen" at all.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Shipley
President