

209 Berkeley Place Circle
Clemson, SC 29631
January 26, 2000

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FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket No. 99-062N
Room 102 Cotton Annex
300 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

To Whom It May Concern:

As an undergraduate student planning on attending veterinary school next year, the future of veterinarians is an important topic for me. Food safety is also a major concern for me as a consumer. Therefore the FSIS docket on the future of FSIS veterinarians is a direct interest for me. Since the recommendations were made around five major issues, I shall discuss each set of recommendations in turn.

The first section, defining the role of the FSIS veterinarian, gave many good recommendations. By defining the in-plant veterinarian as the only government official that determines the level of food safety control in each plant, there will be less confusion and contradiction. This can only benefit food safety by keeping the plant running smoothly. However, this may cause the plant employees and producers to be wary of the veterinarian. Therefore, the encouragement of the veterinarians to interact with these people will help ensure food safety without instigating negative attitudes. Also, having the veterinarians work as educators of the plant employees and producers, as well as the public, will help to strengthen this relationship.

Section II, on education, training, recognition, and recruitment, has many new benefits. By communicating career tracks to veterinary schools and new recruits would help to build the FSIS veterinary workforce. This option is most likely not known by many new veterinarians and could become a distinct possibility to many once the option is made known. This, as well as having a talent resource database that contains the employee advanced education, would allow many veterinarians to utilize skills they have that might not be needed in a normal practice such as a foreign language. And developing an education and training program, as well as reserving a budget for this program, would help the veterinarians and other employees to further their education. This would definitely be beneficial to all involved.

Creating partnerships, as recommended in section III, would also help to ensure that food safety is maintained as a general standard. This would equalize the food safety programs across states as well as increasing food safety on imported foods. Expanding the knowledge of veterinarians in fields such as pathology, microbiology, and residue

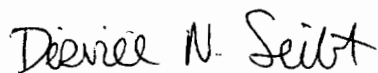
specimen collection through these partnerships will also help to fight food safety in more advanced ways.

Section IV discusses coordinated databases and animal identification. This can only increase food safety. By determining the gaps in existing food safety, public and animal health databases, they can be observed more closely and prevented in the future. Improving the integrated surveillance system will also help increase food safety in a more advanced way. Centralizing the information obtained by this surveillance system will prevent mistakes from being repeated in different plants. And it would be obvious to use the veterinarians as the central collection points for data since they would be overseeing all of these processes.

Veterinary contributions to international credibility of FSIS is discussed in section V. By having a continual veterinary medical presence, this would definitely build the credibility of FSIS while making the public feel much safer. Also, having veterinarians included in international negotiations will help to put the public's fears to rest.

I feel that all of the recommendations in this docket are beneficial ones. While not all will seem to benefit the public directly, they are all needed in the areas they have been placed. Most importantly, I feel that they are a direct benefit to both current veterinarians and future veterinarians such as myself while ensuring better food safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Desiree N. Seibt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Desiree N. Seibt