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FSIS Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

USDA Solicits Comments on Proposed Rule for Downer Cattle

On August 27, USDA announced a proposed rule to amend the federal meat inspection regulations to initiate a complete ban on the slaughter of cattle that become non-ambulatory after initial inspection by FSIS inspection program personnel.

This proposed rule follows the May 20 announcement by Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer to remove the provision that states that FSIS inspection program personnel can determine the disposition of cattle that become non-ambulatory disabled after they have passed ante-mortem, before slaughter, inspection on a case-by-case basis.

Under this proposed rule, all cattle that become non-ambulatory disabled from an acute injury any time after ante-mortem inspection and prior to slaughter, will no longer be eligible to proceed for slaughter. These cattle will be condemned and properly disposed. Establishments will be required to notify FSIS personnel when cattle become disabled after passing ante-mortem inspection.

Comments on this proposed rule must be received on or before September 29. Comments can be sent to Docket Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 2534, South Agriculture Building, Washington, D.C. 20250. Comments can also be sent to fsis.regulationscomments@fsis.usda.gov or submitted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov.

All submissions received must reference the Food Safety and Inspection Service and include the docket number FSIS-2008-0022.

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Export Requirement Updates



The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following:

Croatia

Russia

Singapore

Complete information can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.

Kitchen Companion: Your Safe Food Handbook

This food safety handbook contains all the basic information you need to know about food safety ... some old, some new... and all in one place.



To view the handbook, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Kitchen_Companion.pdf.

FSIS Updates *E. coli* O157:H7 Reports

FSIS has updated *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7 testing data to include information through August 24, 2008.

Results from Analysis of Raw Ground Beef and Raw Ground Beef Component Samples for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7

Raw Ground Beef						
Source	As of August 26, 2007			As of August 24, 2008		
	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive
Federal Plants	7,936	16	0.20	7,550	26	0.34
Retail Stores	120	0	0.00	267	0	0.00
Imports	61	0	0.00	37	1	2.70
Raw Ground Beef Components						
Source	As of August 26, 2007			As of August 24, 2008		
	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive
Federal Plants	348	2	0.57	1,379	8	0.58
Imports	0	0	0.00	354	0	0.00
The above information is based upon data in the FSIS electronic data system as of August 26, 2008. Results are from FSIS routine and follow-up sampling programs.						

E. coli is bacteria found in all mammals and there are many strains that have been identified. Normally, this bacteria has beneficial effects such as preventing the growth of harmful bacteria or the production of certain vitamins. But some strains of *E. coli* can be harmful and cause illness or death. *E. coli* O157:H7 is one of the harmful strains, producing a toxin that causes an inflammatory response and can result in kidney failure and/or other adverse health effects.

Although *E. coli* O157:H7 can be killed through proper cooking, its still has been implicated as the cause of foodborne illness outbreaks. FSIS works to ensure the safety of beef products through its microbiological testing programs to ensure that establishments are taking steps to minimize the presence of *E. coli* O157:H7 in meat products.

Individual positive results from the raw ground beef sampling programs for 2008 are reported on FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/2008_Ecoli_Positive_Results/index.asp.

A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes

Did you know that a flood, fire, national disaster, or the loss of power from hurricanes, high winds, snow, or ice could jeopardize the safety of your food?



Knowing how to determine if food is safe and how to keep food safe will help minimize the potential loss of food and reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

The guide titled, *A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes*, provides specific food safety recommendations on what to do before, during and after tropical storms and hurricanes.

The guidelines also include recommendations about what to do with food stored in refrigerators and freezers.

To view the consumer's guide, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Severe_Storms_and_Hurricanes_Guide.pdf.

Public Meeting: FSIS to Discuss with Stakeholders the Use of Low Dose Irradiation in Beef

FSIS will hold a public meeting on September 18 to communicate with stakeholders and receive public comments on what action it should take with respect to a petition from the American Meat Institute (AMI).

The Agency received a petition from AMI in July 2005 to recognize the use of low penetration and low dose electron beam irradiation on the surface of chilled beef carcasses as a processing aid. A copy of the petition is available on FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Petition_Carcass_Surface_Irrad.pdf.

In this petition AMI argues that research studies demonstrate low dose irradiation in beef is exceptionally effective at reducing levels of *E. coli* O157:H7, does not produce significant losses of either macro- or micro-nutrients and does not have any effect on organoleptic properties, appearance or any lasting effects on shelf life.

Based upon research and information collected, as well as a positive evaluation of the safety of irradiation by the Food and Drug Administration, FSIS will consider data and information contained in the petition.

The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel, 480 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Washington, D.C. To register for this meeting, visit the "Meetings and Events" page of FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Meetings_&_Events/index.asp. A draft agenda is also available for review on this page.

FSIS Posts Domestic Beef Trimmings Report: Nationwide Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program for Raw Ground Beef Component

For the Beef Trimmings Baseline Study, FSIS collected beef trim and subprimal samples from establishments operating under federal inspection from December 2005 to January 2007. All component samples were products that were available for use in the production of raw ground beef.

Under this program, samples were analyzed to estimate the percent positive and levels of *Salmonella*, generic *Escherichia coli*, *Aerobic*
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FSIS to Host Regulatory Education Workshop in New Jersey

As part of FSIS' ongoing initiative to enhance outreach to small and very small plants, the Agency will host a regulatory education workshop on September 4 in New Jersey.

The workshops will cover a variety of topics and prerequisite programs, including hazard analysis and critical control points, sanitation performance standards, sanitation standard operating procedures, rules of practice, food defense strategies as well as *E. coli* O157:H7 related workshops and notices.

The September 4th regulatory workshop will be held at the Renaissance Newark Airport Hotel, 1000 Spring Street, Elizabeth, New Jersey from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

To register by phone, call (800) 336-3747. Online registration forms and information about upcoming sessions can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp.

Beef Trim Report ...

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Plate Count, Enterobacteriaceae, total coliforms and Escherichia coli O157:H7.

The sampling frame included 250 establishments that slaughtered steers/heifers, cows/bulls and calves under federal inspection and produced trim for use in raw ground beef production. Two sets of trim samples were collected at each sampling event. One set was analyzed at FSIS' field services laboratories for the presence and levels of *E. coli* O157:H7. The other set was analyzed at a contract laboratory for the presence and levels of the other listed bacterial targets.

FSIS published this report on its Web site to provide an overview of this baseline study and the microbiological data results derived from domestic beef trimmings sampled during December 2005 through January 2007.

To review this report, visit FSIS' Web site www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Baseline_Data_Domestic_Beef_Trimmings.pdf.

Register to Attend the 2008 Meat and Poultry Inspection Seminars for International Government Officials

FSIS will host the last of three meat and poultry inspection seminars for international officials in Virginia between September 8 and 26.

This three-week seminar will be held at the Ritz Carlton training facility in Arlington and will provide information focusing on verification and enforcement of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point, pathogen reduction and import/export policies.

The intention of these seminars is to familiarize international government officials with inspection regulations and procedures used by FSIS to assure that the nation's meat, poultry and processed egg products are safe, wholesome and properly labeled.

Other topics and activities include foreign inspection program equivalence, field trips to import/export locations as well as processing and slaughter plants. For more information regarding these seminars, visit FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/2008_Meat_&_Poultry_Inspection_Seminars/index.asp.