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FSIS Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

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

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 and review an agenda for this meeting, visit the "Meetings and Events" page of FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Meetings_&_Events/index.asp.



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Export Requirement Updates



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

Albania

Cuba

Japan

Kazakhstan

Mexico

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

Be Prepared, Be Food Safe

Two new video casts in American Sign Language, titled, “Food Safety During a Power Outage” and “Be Food Safe” have been added to the *SignFSIS* library.



Visit FSIS’ Web site to check them out www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/SignFSIS/index.asp.

FSIS Updates *E. coli* O157:H7 Reports

FSIS began testing for *E. coli* O157:H7 in 1994. Originally, testing at retail stores represented 70% to 80% of raw ground beef samples. By 1998, about half of the samples were from retail stores. Retail testing was performed to coordinate with other programs, provide a greater opportunity for detection, provide testing at the last point in the commercial process and provide surveillance when few retail stores required testing by their suppliers.

Since then, FSIS has recognized the importance of testing to verify the effectiveness of an establishment’s Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system and chose to focus its sampling earlier in the process where prevention and interventions were more feasible.

Starting in 2000, FSIS directed more of its testing program to federally inspected establishments. FSIS testing of federally inspected establishments rose from 75% in 2000 to more than 95% in 2007.

E. coli O157:H7 testing by FSIS, to include data through August 31, 2008, is summarized in the table below.

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

Raw Ground Beef						
Source	As of September 2, 2007			As of August 31, 2008		
	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive
Federal Plants	8,200	16	0.20	7,738	27	0.35
Retail Stores	120	0	0.00	280	0	0.00
Imports	61	0	0.00	38	1	2.63
Raw Ground Beef Components						
Source	As of September 2, 2007			As of August 31, 2008		
	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive	Number Analyzed	Number Positive	Percent Positive
Federal Plants	365	2	0.55	1,438	9	0.63
Imports	0	0	0.00	362	1	0.28
The above information is based upon data in the FSIS electronic data system as of September 3, 2008. Results are from FSIS routine and follow-up sampling programs.						

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.

FSIS Issues Notices

This week, FSIS issued the following Notices:

- Notice 56-08: *Conducting Food Safety Assessments Related to the Control of Salmonella.*

This notice addresses food safety assessments conducted to analyze an establishment's control of *Salmonella*. In particular, this notice provides specified methodologies that FSIS personnel are to use when evaluating control of *Salmonella* in poultry slaughter operations. Also, this document reissues the content of FSIS Notice 47-07, titled *Conducting Food Safety Assessments Related to the Control of Salmonella*.

- Notice 58-08: *Instructions for Performing Food Defense Verification Procedures at Identification Warehouses.*

Beginning September 15, inspection program personnel are to conduct one food defense verification procedure in identification warehouses when present to perform voluntary inspection services as set out in FSIS Directive 12,600.1, titled *Voluntary Reimbursable Inspection Services*.

To review these notices in detail, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/FSIS_Notices_Index/index.asp.

NACMCF Subcommittee to Hold a Web-meeting

The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) Subcommittee on Parameters for Inoculated Pack/Challenge Study Protocols will hold a Web conference on September 9 and September 12.

The purpose of this Web meeting is to review a draft report on recommendations for the appropriate criteria for inoculated pack/challenge studies to determine if a food requires time/temperature control for food safety.

The Web-meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 9 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm EST and Friday, September 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. EST.

Due to limited connections, the public is invited to attend through the computer terminal that will be connected to the meetings at the Aerospace Building, 901 D Street S.W., Room 372, Washington, DC.

To attend this meeting, contact Karen Thomas-Sharp, NACMCF advisory committee specialist at (202)690-6620 or via email at karen.thomas-sharp@fsis.usda.gov. All persons wishing to attend must RSVP in advance.

USDA to Host Public Meeting on Animal Raising Claims

FSIS and USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will host a public meeting on Oct 14 to discuss and review its policies on the use of animal raising claims in the labeling of meat and poultry products.

FSIS evaluates animal raising claims by considering information on animal production practices submitted by companies as part of their label approval requests. However, recent events concerning labeling claims related to the use of antibiotics in the raising of poultry have led FSIS to question its ability to verify that labels of meat and poultry products that contain animal raising claims are truthful and not misleading. Therefore, FSIS and AMS will solicit public input and review its policies on claims related to the use of antibiotics in poultry and on animal raising claims in general.

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. An agenda will be available for review on FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/index.asp.

Preparing for a Weather Emergency



Power outages can occur at any time of the year and it often takes from a few hours to several days for electricity to be restored to residential areas, especially in cases of inclement weather?

Knowing 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.

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

FSIS Extends Comment Period for Draft Compliance Guidelines for Sampling Beef Trimmings and Beef Products for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7

On August 15, FSIS posted on its Web site two draft compliance guideline documents on sampling with a particular focus on beef trimmings for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 (*E. coli* O157:H7).

FSIS provided the documents to stakeholders for review with a 30-day comment period. The Agency has decided to extend the comment period and asks that comments to be submitted on or before November 17. All stakeholders are encouraged to submit their comments via email to the Office of Policy and Program Development, Risk Management Division at FSISGuidanceDocumentComments@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS plans to hold a public meeting soon that will be announced in *FSIS' Constituent Update* and in an upcoming *Federal Register* notice, for discussion of guidance documents, comments received and final guidance to be issued.

These draft guidance documents are intended to provide information about the design of sampling and testing programs for *E. coli* O157:H7. These documents are focused on manufacturers and users of boneless beef manufacturing "trimmings" and other raw ground beef components. These draft guidance documents are intended to assist establishments in developing programs to assess the adequacy of process controls for *E. coli* O157:H7.

To view the *Compliance Guidelines for Sampling Beef Trimmings for Escherichia coli* O157:H7, visit FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Compliance_Guides_Index/index.asp#Ecoli.