



October 4, 2007

The Honorable John. D. Dingell
The Honorable Bart Stupak
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20515-6115
Sent via e-mail to David.Nelson@mail.house.gov.

Dear Chairman Dingell and Honorable Representative Stupak:

This letter responds to your letter dated September 13 requesting information regarding Target's sale of certain fresh meat products. As you may know, Target is a national discount retailer with stores in 47 states and over 350,000 employees. Of the 1,537 Target stores, 192 are SuperTarget stores which combine a grocery store with a general merchandise Target store. Fresh meat products are sold only in SuperTarget stores. Accordingly, the Committee's questions and Target's answers below are relevant only to Target's SuperTarget stores.

1. Temperature Control

- a. Has Target commissioned or performed any in-house studies regarding the temperature of its storage and retail displays that house fresh meat and fish, if applicable, that have been treated with carbon monoxide?*

As part of Target's emphasis on maintaining a strong brand with consumers, Target evaluates all aspects of its business for continual improvement. Target has not specifically conducted studies regarding the temperature of its storage and retail displays relating only to fresh meat treated with carbon monoxide. Target has, however, conducted several store studies for the purpose of assessing how well Target's cold chain supply processes were working from end to end. The results indicated that Target's in-store refrigeration and cold chain supply processes are working well. In addition, Target has systems in place, as described below, to ensure that all meat sold at SuperTarget is fresh.

- b. Does Target measure the temperature in its fresh meat display cases? If so, please describe the protocols for measuring the temperature, including where in the display case the temperature is measured, e.g., top, bottom, front, or rear of the case. Please also provide the range of variation in temperature for each measurement period from January 1, 2004, forward*

for the 10 largest and 10 smallest Target stores that sell fresh meat (measured by value of meat sales, if available). If Target does not measure the temperature of its fresh meat display cases, how does Target ensure that the meat on display is not spoiled?

Target continuously monitors the temperature in its fresh meat display cases. Target's meat cases are equipped with an automated temperature monitoring system. The system is programmed to maintain the cases at specified temperatures in accordance with health and safety standards. If a case registers a temperature outside of the allowable range, an alarm will sound notifying store personnel as well as the refrigeration monitoring center in Minneapolis. The temperature is generally measured at the case return air stream and the case discharge air stream. Target specifications require manufacturers to provide at least a discharge air temperature sensor in each meat case. The exact location of the sensors depends on the make and model of the specific case and varies from manufacturer to manufacturer. Target does not have temperature records going back to January 1, 2004 and does not routinely determine the range of temperature variation for any group of stores or otherwise, absent an event triggering an alarm at a specific location.

In addition, to ensure product arrives at Target at the appropriate temperature, Target checks the temperature of all fresh meat products immediately at the time of delivery. If product does not meet Target's temperature standards, it is rejected.

- c. Has Target received any citations from regulators for inadequate temperature control in meat since January 1, 2004? If so, please provide all documents relating to such citations.*

Citations, if any, are kept at the store level. A centralized summary of any citations is kept at headquarters for one year. Target has searched the summary information and does not have records of any citations from regulators for inadequate temperature control.

- d. Please describe the due diligence that Target performs on the suppliers of such fresh meat products regarding temperature controls in the processing and transport of these products.*

Quality and freshness is a top priority for Target. Target only sources owned-brand fresh meat products from Target approved U.S.D.A inspected suppliers. To ensure Target's guests are always satisfied with Target's fresh meat products, Target conducted an extensive review of the vendor selected for its own Archer Farms meat products. Key elements of the review and approval process include a Target on site food safety and quality assurance assessment and a third-party food safety, Good Manufacturing Practices ("GMP"), and regulatory compliance manufacturing facility audit. In addition, Target commissioned an independent study of cold chain supply processes. Target continues to require annual audits and reviews the vendor's performance on a number of dimensions annually.

For national brand products, such as those supplied by Hormel and Cargill, Target relies on the well-established expertise of experienced suppliers. In addition, Target reviews plant operations via an on-site walk-through process several times a year and performs quarterly product quality reviews.

2. *Consumer Purchasing Behavior*

Please provide all information and all documents Target has generated or examined relating to the following studies or focus groups regarding:

- a. *Criteria for consumer selection of fresh meat products;*
- b. *Consumer acceptance of meat whose color is preserved by carbon monoxide;*
- c. *Consumer ability to smell or otherwise detect spoiling meat; and*
- d. *The ability and actual experience of consumers reading “use or freeze by” dates on packages.*

The documents in Target’s possession relating to these topics are studies provided to Target by Hormel. Target believes these documents have already been provided to the Committee by Hormel. Nevertheless, if the Committee would like Target to provide the copies it has, Target will do so upon request.

3. *Labeling/Store Signs*

- a. *If applicable, please provide any special labeling or store signs that Target employs to inform consumers that the meat has been treated with carbon monoxide, including any labeling or signs advising consumers that the color of treated meat should not be used to judge freshness.*

Target does not provide signage relating to the use of carbon monoxide or meat color.

- b. *Please describe how Target assures that consumers, particularly those with poor eyesight, can read the “use or freeze by” dates on packages of carbon monoxide treated meat, and provide copies of any special labeling Target used to assure readability of those dates.*

Guest service and satisfaction is a Target priority. Any guest with poor eyesight will be assisted upon request by a Target team member. Target does not apply any additional labeling regarding the “use or freeze by” dates as all such labeling is provided by the vendor.

4. *Shelf Life.*

- a. *Upon receipt by Target and placement in the retail display case, what is the average shelf life remaining for carbon monoxide treated meat (i.e., how many days before the labeled "use or freeze by" date)?*

The total shelf life of a fresh meat product varies depending on the type of meat (e.g., poultry versus beef.) The range of remaining shelf life for fresh meat products treated with carbon monoxide varies accordingly. Target's goal is that all fresh meat products delivered to the store have at least 50% of their total shelf life remaining. Target will not accept at the store meat products with a remaining shelf life of less than seven days. In most cases, the actual remaining shelf life is 11 days or more. Target also carries a small number of "value-added" products (meat combined with other ingredients such as stuffing or vegetables). These are convenience items that are intended to be consumed soon after purchase. The minimum remaining shelf life that Target accepts for value-added products is four days.

- b. *On average, how long is fresh meat that has not been treated with carbon monoxide held in the retail display case?*

As stated above, the range of remaining shelf life for fresh meat products varies depending on the total shelf-life for a product and the type of meat. For non-carbon monoxide treated meat, the range of remaining shelf life is generally from 7-14 days.

- c. *Please describe and provide all documents relating to any protocols Target employs to ensure that meat that is past its labeled "use or freeze by" date is pulled from the display case and is no longer offered for sale, including steps the company takes to ensure that these protocols are followed. Please provide any disciplinary records regarding store managers that have violated these protocols (names of individuals, but not store locations, may be redacted).*

Target's policies require each store to meet certain "Up and Ready Standards" every day. In the meat and seafood department, each store is required to clean the meat cases, check all freshness dates and cull any product that is unsold as of the "use or freeze by" date. These tasks are completed before 8 a.m. every day. Copies of the relevant policy and procedure documents are enclosed.

Target does not categorize its disciplinary records in a way that allows it to locate any disciplinary actions specifically related to the "Up and Ready Standards." As part of the regular review and inspection process for all SuperTarget stores, however, stores are evaluated on the freshness of perishables. In particular, stores are regularly evaluated on many criteria, including adherence to culling practices, freshness of product in the backroom, team member completion of food safety training, cleanliness of cases, and the flat-stacking of meat.

- d. *What does Target do with carbon monoxide treated meat that remains unsold past the labeled “use or freeze by” date?*

Any meat product that is unsold as of the “use or freeze by” is removed from the meat display case and put into a designated disposal bin. The waste is then picked-up and disposed of by one of several nationwide vendors approved for such services.

- e. *How does Target determine the shelf life of meat not treated with carbon monoxide?*

As with all fresh meat products, Target uses the “use or freeze by dates” provided by the vendor to cull products and ensure freshness. In addition, as described above, Target has procedures and systems in place to monitor the temperature of its meat cases and otherwise ensure freshness. Any Target guest who is not satisfied with the freshness of an item purchased at SuperTarget may return it to the store for a full refund.

5. *Losses Due to Spoilage.*

- a. *What is the average loss due to spoilage of (1) ground meat and (2) other cuts that have been prepackaged in an atmosphere containing carbon monoxide?*

Target may cull a meat item or otherwise remove it from sale for a number of reasons, including damaged packaging, the product is at the “use or freeze by date” and spoilage. Loss of product due to theft also reduces inventory. Target tracks all of these causes collectively as a loss of product and does not separately track spoilage alone.

- b. *How does this loss compare to meat that is not treated with carbon monoxide?*

The total loss rate for carbon monoxide treated meat products and non-carbon monoxide treated meat products is comparable.

- c. *When such losses occur, does Target absorb the loss or does the meat packer reimburse the stores for spoiled meat?*

Once Target has accepted delivery of any meat products, any subsequent loss is absorbed by Target.

- d. *Do the same commercial terms apply to carbon monoxide packed meat as meat that has not been so treated?*

Yes. Once Target has accepted delivery of any meat products, any subsequent loss is absorbed by Target.

6. *Consumer Complaints.*

Does Target have any system in place that is capable of documenting consumer complaints relating to carbon monoxide treated meat? If so, please describe such systems and provide any documents relating to such consumer complaints.

Guest feedback is important to Target. To better understand the experiences of our guests, Target tracks guest comments or inquiries. The comments are organized based on how the guest described the issue or comment. Target has searched the information it has for any comments relating to carbon monoxide treated meat or treated meat. Target has received 14 guest comments on this topic. A summary of the guest comments is enclosed.

Finally, to the extent not otherwise requested, please provide all records relating to Target's decision to sell fresh meat products treated with carbon monoxide.

Target does not have any additional documents specifically relating to its decision to sell fresh meat packaged in an atmosphere of carbon monoxide.

Providing great guest service together with the products our guests want is part of the Target brand. As with any perishable item Target sells, Target is careful to ensure that quality and freshness are preserved from plant to shopping cart. I hope the information Target has provided helps the Committee better understand the precautions Target takes to ensure safety, freshness and guest satisfaction with fresh meat products purchased at SuperTarget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nate Garvis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Nate Garvis
Vice President, Government Affairs

Enclosures

Culling: Meat & Seafood

Food safety and freshness can't be overemphasized. Guests can become very sick from meat and seafood deteriorating due to poor handling at the store. That's why it's important to inspect the Meat and Seafood Department frequently and thoroughly, and remove, or cull, items from the sales floor when they don't meet our standards.

There are two parts to culling:

- Examine the product on the sales floor for freshness.
- Check the dates on items on the sales floor to be sure they're still within their sell-by dates.

When you're culling, watch for the following:

Concern	Cull it?
Today's date is the sell-by date	Yes
Purge	A small amount of purge is normal, but if there is enough to make the item look unappetizing, cull it.
Case-tired product	Yes
Outer layer of fat looks too thick	Yes, if the covering of fat exceeds our 1/8" standard.
Dark bone	No.

Should I rewrap this item? No! We don't rewrap beef, pork, seafood, chicken.

Meat items that are being discarded must be put into the "bone barrel," a special garbage tub.

Presentation standards are very closely tied to food safety standards in Meat and Seafood. By following presentation standards, you'll have fewer items to cull, less rewrapping, fewer markouts, and increased food safety.



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Tell Us What You Think

Fresh Meat & Seafood: Signing and Presentation

Presentation standards:

- Set per planogram.
- All fresh product is flat-stacked.
- Beef should never exceed two layers high.

Labeling standards:

- Place scale labels in the upper right corner of the package.

Signing standards:

- Place coordinating channel strip on each shelf within the appropriate section.
- Sign price reduction items (Sale/TPC/ESV) with the appropriate 3x5" sign placed in the 4' label channel strip.
- Use beef descriptive placecards for each cut of beef.
- Use black dividers to separate each cut of beef.

 [Show me a picture of the Meat and Seafood case.](#)

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Time and Temperature

Food safety is closely tied to two things: time and temperature. The most important thing to remember is: **Keep hot foods hot, and keep cold foods cold.**

When food is in the Danger Zone (41-140°F), bacteria can reproduce quickly and possibly make guests sick. How can you avoid temperature-related problems?

- Check the freezer and refrigerator temperatures.
- Use thermometers to check the temperatures of heated and refrigerated foods.
- Store refrigerated or frozen food deliveries in the proper temperature zone within 30 minutes.
- Serve food immediately. Don't let anything sit out after preparation.
- Use the QuickCheck in the deli to monitor food temperatures.

Bacteria thrive in warm, moist, protein-rich environments. The ideal temperature range for bacteria to reproduce and grow is known as the **Danger Zone** (41-140°F).

Keep any temperature sensitive food items out of the Danger Zone!

Routine temperature checks must be completed in order to monitor internal food temperature and ensure refrigeration units are at the proper temperature.

Throughout the day, several items in the hot and cold prep table must be checked for correct cooking and holding [temperatures](#). These temperatures are then [recorded](#) using the [QuickCheck](#) device.

Of course, any item, whether it's the right temperature or not, reaches a point at which it's just too old to be eaten, and that's why we pay careful attention to [sell-by dates](#). But because we cull so frequently, it's much more common to run into problems with items held at the wrong temperature.

Bacteria thrive at temperatures between 41°F and 140°F. Temperatures below that range slow bacterial growth, and temperatures above it kill bacteria. Beware of:

- Heating items to a temperature that isn't hot enough to kill bacteria
- Heating items too slowly
- Cooking items to the right temperature but letting the temperature fall below the hot hold temperature of 140°
- [Letting cooked items cool too slowly](#)
- Letting cold items get warm (cold hold temperature = 41°F)

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Recording Markouts With QMOS

For ALL food areas, SuperTarget Perishable/Production Departments, Food Service, Starbucks, and Consumables.

When items don't meet our freshness standards or have been used for samples/demos, we record the items in the QMOS (Quantity Mark Out-of-Stock) application to account for them. However, for SBT and some DSD items, the vendor should pick up the product and issue a credit. When we record a **cost** item in QMOS, we are simply logging items that didn't sell – **there is no financial reduction of bookstock or markdown for items owned at cost.** Items owned at retail, all general merchandise and many grocery items, capture markdowns based on data entered into QMOS.

Then why do we use QMOS for cost items?

Recording product that doesn't sell helps the stores make the best ordering and production decisions. Headquarters uses the information to determine product mix and identify items that may not be selling well enough to remain on the adjacency.

At Target, our shrink rates tend to be on the high end of the industry average because we cull more aggressively than most stores.

Is property loss recorded in QMOS?

Items ruined due to a natural disaster or power failure are NOT recorded in QMOS. Record property loss in the Property Loss Report (for losses greater than \$2500) found on Workbench under **References > Safety > Forms**. Once you've completed that, follow the directions listed under the Claim Procedures.

Keeping track of shrink:

1. You can check out your weekly shrink numbers using the **Weekly Grocery Shrink by Store by Division** Report (STXWT0ALL033) in VIEW.
2. Compare your numbers to your goals and industry figures to see how you're doing.

[Click here for step-by-step instructions on using the QMOS application.](#)

Meat and Seafood

Trainer Notes

Time: 1 hour

Trainer Tools

Tell

- The Up and Ready Standards help you keep your sales floor appropriately full at all times. For example, if it's late at night, it's not necessary to restock the meat and seafood so all the cases are two items deep. In the middle of the day however, restocking to maintain a full case is appropriate.
- Team members should keep an eye on the meat and seafood cases and use good judgment. For example, even though the standards say that 6:00-8:00 pm is time to zone product to maintain presentation, team members should be ready to continue stocking if necessary due to high sales.
- Explain that these Up and Ready Standards are located on the Stores Workbench on the Food Operations tab.

Up and Ready Standards

Up and Ready Standards give the team specific times certain important tasks need to be completed. These times aren't guidelines – they're best practices that have been developed to ensure that guests are always treated to the best possible shopping experience.

Time	Tasks
By 8am	▪ Department is culled, cleaned, and all dates are checked.
By 9am	▪ All display cases are being filled and all items are in stock and ready for business: Beef, Pork, Seafood, Chicken, and Processed Meat.
9am to 6pm	▪ Seafood and display cases are being replenished.
6pm to 8pm	▪ Department is selling down. Zone to maintain presentation.
9pm	▪ The Meat department service counter is closed.

STL Food Walk

Action by STL	Choose one	Comments/Action Plan
Meat		
11 Audit 15 items for rotation and freshness (three items from each protein)	<input type="radio"/> G <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> R	
11 Coupons are only on product with expiration dates of tomorrow	<input type="radio"/> G <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> R	
12 In-stocks are appropriate based on day, time and truck schedule	<input type="radio"/> G <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> R	
15 Cooler backroom inventory levels are appropriate based on truck to shelf.	<input type="radio"/> G <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> R	

Trainer Notes

Tell

- Explain the importance of backroom inventory levels and how this directly correlates with profitability. If there is too high a level of inventory in the backroom, our guest is not always getting the freshest product and we are losing days to sell.

Audit 15 items for rotation and freshness (three from each protein) (daily).

- Verify that all items have been culled and FIFO rotated prior to store opening.

Coupons are only on product with expiration dates of tomorrow

- Coupons should be placed on items during the morning cull that are 1 day away from expiration.
- TPC's are being used for any overstock or short dated items (no more than 7 days and 25% off).

Instocks are appropriate based on day, time and truck schedule. (daily)

STL Food Walk

Action by STL	Choose one	Comments/Action Plan
Meat		
I1 Audit 15 items for rotation and freshness (three items from each protein)	<input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	
I1 Coupons are only on product with expiration dates of tomorrow	<input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	
I2 In-stocks are appropriate based on day, time and truck schedule	<input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	
I5 Cooler backroom inventory levels are appropriate based on truck to shelf.	<input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	

Cooler backroom inventory levels are appropriate based on truck to shelf (daily).

- Audit the meat backroom cooler to ensure dates are less than 4 days old (7 days for D.210 meat).
- Check for over-ordering; signs include multiple case packs in the backroom and overfilled sales floor presentation. This can also be determined by looking at the dates on the sales floor and backroom.
- Ask the Meat team leader what their Store Order Accuracy Index Score and receipt to sales % is. (Are they utilizing shrink reports, HQ's pushes, order history and top selling item reporting to manage order process?)
- Sonoma seafood is ordered by phone or fax twice a week.
- MAP packaging product (beef and pork) should have 2 weeks of selling time on the sales floor once received/stocked if ordered accurately. (Minimum date requirements are 7 days for SuperValu to refuse product).
- Check to ensure the product is organized by item and all processed meats are on location.



Learning Plan
Team Member Information

Last Name

First Name MI

Team Member # Store #

Start Date: _____

Meat and Seafood Team Member

Before completing this learning plan, make sure you complete all tasks on the following learning plan(s):

- Food Team Basics Learning Plan

Training Shift # 6 **2.5 hours**

Training Date ____/____/____

Materials List

Materials you will need during this shift

- RTS: Using the Scale
- Mettler Toledo Scale
- Best Practice: Meat & Seafood Opening Shift
- Best Practice: Meat & Seafood Closing Shift

Tell, Show, Do **Review**

Using the Scale Spend 30 minutes on this topic	Check for understanding. Team member is able to:
Complete the RTS course "Using the Scale"	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify the main functions on the scale's main screen and item detail screen <input type="checkbox"/> Print a scale label using the presets, keypad and search functions <input type="checkbox"/> Understand the importance of changing the Accumulator function <input type="checkbox"/> Identify error messages and fix accordingly

Open/Close Best Practices Spend 2 hours on this topic	Check for understanding. Team member is able to:
Complete the Open/Close Best Practices for the Meat & Seafood department	<input type="checkbox"/> Accurately open the department <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately close the department



Check for Understanding

Questions	Great Job	Needs Work
1. Show me how to print a scale label for a production item.		
2. Demonstrate how the Accumulator function on the scale works.		

Sign when complete, team member is now capable of completing this task.

Team Member: _____

Trainer: _____

I have successfully completed all activities listed on this learning plan.

Team Member Signature: _____

Team Leader: _____

Today's Date: _____

ETL-HR Instructions: At the completion of training, enter the completion date into the MAX Training Admin system. After the 90 day review, send the original learning plan to the TMSC, you do not need to retain a copy at the store.



Learning Plan
Team Member Information

Last Name

First Name MI

Team Member # Store #

Start Date: _____

Meat and Seafood Team Leader

Before completing this learning plan, make sure you complete all tasks on the following learning plan(s):

- Food Team Basics Learning Plan
- Meat and Seafood Team Member Learning Plan
- Food Leader Basics Learning Plan

Training Shift # 1 **1.25 hours**

Training Date ____/____/____

Materials List

Materials you will need during this shift

- Meat Coupons
- RTS: Completing Production Department Price Changes (????)

Tell, Show, Do	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review
Expand your Meat and Seafood Department Knowledge	Check for understanding. Team member is able to:
<i>Spend 1.25 hours on this topic</i>	

Access Eureka! Food Operations Meat and Seafood link on the home page

- Identify freshness standards in Meat and Seafood
- Maintain proper in-stock in Meat and Seafood
- Identify guest service standards in Meat and Seafood
- Maintain a profitable Meat and Seafood Department

Check for Understanding

Questions	Great Job	Needs Work
1. What are two ways your team ensures meat and seafood is always at the peak of freshness?		
2. Describe three processes that help to ensure proper in-stocks in Meat and Seafood.		
3. Describe four ways the Meat and Seafood Team's ensures the guest receives a target brand shopping experience.		
4. Describe your daily tasks that help maintain profitability in Meat and Seafood.		

Sign when complete. Team member can now be scheduled for these tasks.

Team Member: _____

Trainer: _____



I have successfully completed all activities listed on this learning plan.

Team Member Signature: _____

Team Leader: _____

Today's Date: _____

ETL-HR Instructions: At the completion of training, enter the completion date into the MAX Training Admin system. After the 90 day review, send the original learning plan to the TMSC, you do not need to retain a copy at the store.

Summary of Guest Comments

Below is a listing of comments received by Guest Relations relating to carbon monoxide treated meat or treated meat:

- Eight comments expressed general concerns/inquiries about meat being treated with carbon monoxide and/or tenderizing solutions.
- Three comments were from the same guest alleging Target adds carbon monoxide and “patented additives” to meat to hide spoilage.
- One guest reported that the meat she purchased smelled spoiled prior to the sell-by date.
- One guest reported that her meat smelled spoiled even though it was purchased and frozen prior to the sell-by date. The guest said she recognized that carbon monoxide is used to extend shelf-life but thinks that something went wrong in this processing.
- One guest reported that the meat she purchases at Target has a consistently sour smell (guest believes this has happened at least four times).