



FSIS Constituent Update

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Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety

Listeria Rule Report Now Available

A report outlining the impact of the interim final rule designed to further reduce the incidence of *Listeria monocytogenes* (LM) in ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products is now available on FSIS' Web site. The report shows that the overall safety of these products has improved in response to the *Listeria* interim final rule because establishments have strengthened their control procedures, increased testing and taken additional steps to eliminate the pathogen.

“Under the *Listeria* rule, ready-to-eat meat and poultry products are safer and public health is being better protected,” Agriculture Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Elsa Murano said. “If progress continues at the current rate, we should achieve the Healthy People 2010 goal of lowering the incidence of *listeriosis* to 0.25 cases per 100,000 people.”

The report was prepared by a 28-member FSIS assessment team, which evaluated and measured the effectiveness of all aspects of the interim final rule, as well as the rule's effect on public health, consumer education and its economic impact. Implementation of the rule in small and very small plants and retail establishments was also assessed by the team. The team made recommendations in such areas as inspector training, product sampling, retail food handling and communicating to small businesses.

The complete report, entitled “Assessing the Effectiveness of the *Listeria monocytogenes* Interim Final Rule” is available on the FSIS Web site at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Oppde/rdad/frpubs/97-013F/LM_Assessment_Report_2004.pdf.

FSIS will consider comments on the assessment team's report along with those received on the LM interim final rule. The comment period on the interim final rule has been extended to coincide with the close of the comment period on the report, January 31, 2005. Comments should be submitted to: FSIS Docket Clerk, Docket #04-032N, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 102, Cotton Annex, 300 12th St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-3700.

Export Requirement Updates

The [Library of Export Requirements](#) has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following countries:

Australia

Guatemala

Jamaica

Kosovo

Mexico

Switzerland

Complete information is available online at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OFO/export/explib.htm



Updated Compliance Guidelines and Questions and Answers for *Listeria* Interim Final Rule

FSIS updated the Compliance Guidelines and the Questions and Answers (Q's and A's) to the *Listeria* interim final rule, "Control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in Ready-to-Eat Meat and Poultry Products" and it is now available on the FSIS web site. The update includes responses to comments and questions that FSIS received for clarification and those received at the five workshops that FSIS conducted prior to implementation.

The Q&A documents are available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/10240.4/resource_3.pdf.

The Compliance Guidelines are available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FRPubs/Docs_97-013F.htm.

Johanns Nominated to be New Ag Secretary

On Thursday, Dec. 2, President Bush named Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns to serve as the 28th U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Johanns thanked Bush for inviting him to serve, saying, "If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to advancing your rural agenda for the 21st century. Your administration and the fine men and women of the Department of Agriculture have strengthened America's food and ag system for the benefit of farmers and ranchers, rural communities, the environment and the American consumer."

Born in Iowa and raised on a dairy farm, Johanns became a lawyer and served in county and city government before becoming mayor of Lincoln, Neb., in 1991. He won the governor's office in 1998 and in 2002.

"I'm very, very proud of my ag background. I do feel that those years on that dairy farm did much to define who I am as a person," Johanns said.

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman congratulated Johanns on being named. "Governor Johanns brings tremendous strength to this position and will serve the President, this Department and American agriculture well during the next four years. I have no doubt that he will continue the strong leadership tradition at USDA and build on the many accomplishments this Administration has achieved during its first term."



Holiday Food Safety

Now that Thanksgiving has past you may have a few leftovers. Here are some tips on keeping leftovers safe during the holiday:

Use Shallow Containers

Divide cooked foods into shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid, even cooling. Reheat hot foods to 165°F. Keep the rest of the food hot in the oven (set at 200 - 250°F) or cold in the refrigerator until serving time.

Two-Hour Rule

Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the buffet table and discard anything left out two hours or more.

FSIS Technical Service Center

The Technical Service Center (TSC) provides technical assistance, advice, and guidance to FSIS inspection employees, industry representatives, plant owners and operators, trade group representatives, consumer groups, government officials and many others about the implementation and enforcement of regulations and policies for both domestic and imported products. It also provides assistance regarding the implementation of national policies, programs, systems and procedures.

The TSC also manages technical training of field inspectors, veterinarians and enforcement personnel. It coordinates technical operations for import inspection, manages the National Residue Program, provides technical guidance for certification of exports and conducts reviews of programs in federal plants, state-inspected plants and foreign countries that export to the United States.

Call Volume and Types of Questions

The TSC staff fields approximately 4,000 calls each week on various issues. Some examples of questions are: What are the equivalence requirements for a foreign country inspection program? Do new very small plants have to have a HACCP plan in place when they open for business? What are the requirements for opening a facility? How do I implement a particular directive? What is the resolution of a particular export certification problem? All questions or issues pertaining to meat, poultry and egg products that come into the TSC are researched, clarified and answered by the TSC technical experts in a timely manner.

How to Contact the TSC

The Technical Service Center can be reached at:

(402) 221-7400

(402) 221-7438 FAX

Hotline—1-800-233-3935

E-mail: tech.center@usda.gov

Hours of operation: 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Central time)

HACCP Hotline: 1-800-233-3935

(press 2 to connect to the HACCP Hotline)

For more information on TSC visit: www.fsis.usda.gov/about/technical_service_center

To submit comments or questions, contact the editor at:

fsisupdate@fsis.usda.gov (202) 720-9113

THIS WEEK'S HOT WEB LINKS

News and Events

[www.fsis.usda.gov/
News_&_Events/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/)

Small and Very Small Plant Outreach

[www.fsis.usda.gov/
Science_Small_Very_
Small_Plant_Outreach/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science_Small_Very_Small_Plant_Outreach/)

Regulatory Enforcement

[www.fsis.usda.gov/
Regulations_&_Policies/
Regulatory_Enforce-
ment/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Regulatory_Enforcement/)

