



FSIS Constituent Update

Volume 5, Issue 43

December 10, 2004

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety

FSIS is Accepting Comments on *Listeria* Rule Report

FSIS is accepting comments on the recently released 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. 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.

FSIS will consider comments on the 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 for 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.

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/regulations_&_policies/RD_97-013F/

Public Meeting Set to Discuss Food Labeling Agenda Items

On January 19, 2005, Leslye Fraser, U.S. Delegate to Codex Committee on Food Labeling, has scheduled a public meeting to discuss biotech labeling, country of origin labeling, quantitative ingredient labeling and advertising. The meeting will be held in Harvey Wiley Federal Building, FDA 5100 Paint Branch Parkway, College Park, Md. Room 1A-003 (Auditorium) from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. For more information contact Leslye Fraser at (301) 436-2378 or by e-mail at leslye.fraser@fda.hhs.gov

Export Requirement Updates

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

Canada

Jamaica

Jordan

Russia

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



Food Safety Resource: The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

My husband got a cured ham as a gift and left it in the car trunk all day. Since it's cured, it's safe, isn't it?"

"I just discovered I cooked the turkey with the package of giblets still inside the cavity. Are the turkey and giblets safe to eat?"

These and thousands of other questions are posed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline every year, especially during the holiday season, America's favorite time to cook. Callers don't want to discard valuable food, but more importantly, they don't want to serve food that could make someone sick.

The Hotline has served over two million callers since it began operating on July 1, 1985. Educating consumers about food safety to reduce the risk of foodborne illness is the Hotline's overriding mission.

Instant Information to Consumers

Hotline food safety specialists are able to assess the caller's knowledge of food safety and provide appropriate guidance. Talking callers through a difficult or puzzling situation helps them choose the safest food-handling alternatives, thus reducing the risk of foodborne illness. Specialists also assist by clearing up misconceptions callers may have about food safety. The Hotline is staffed by food safety specialists with backgrounds in home economics, nutrition and food technology. In an emergency situation, such as an outbreak of foodborne illness, a power outage or natural disaster, the Hotline provides vital information to consumers in a timely manner. For example, in the event of a meat or poultry recall, callers can obtain detailed information that will help them identify the suspect product.

How to Contact the Hotline

You may speak with a food safety specialist — in English or Spanish — from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern time on weekdays year-round. Recorded food safety messages may be heard 24 hours a day. The toll-free number is 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). The toll-free number for the hearing impaired (TTY) is 1-800-256-7072. Questions can also be answered 24/7 by "Ask Karen" at www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/ASK_KAREN/. Karen is a Web-based system that answers typed questions about the safe handling, preparation and storage of meat, poultry and egg products. For more information on the Hotline visit: www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/USDA_meat_&_poultry_hotline/

To submit comments or questions, contact the editor at:

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



Holiday Food Safety

I frequently order take-out foods when I am entertaining. What should I do with the food after I bring it home?

How you handle the food will depend on its temperature when you pick it up. First, take the food home immediately. Do not leave take-out foods at room temperature longer than two hours. At room temperatures over 90 °F, discard after one hour.

Foods cold when picked up should be refrigerated until serving time. If the food is hot, and you will be eating within two hours, keep it in an oven set at a high enough temperature to keep the internal temperature at 140 °F. Use a food thermometer to monitor the internal temperature of the food. If you are picking up the foods far in advance, refrigerate them and reheat later for serving.