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FSIS Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

Secretary Ed Schafer Announces Plan To End Exceptions to Animal Handling Rule

Secretary Ed Schafer announced on May 20 a complete end to exceptions within the animal handling rule, so that the slaughter of disabled non-ambulatory cattle is prohibited.

The announcement follows upon Schafer’s call in February for the Office of the Inspector General and FSIS to investigate allegations of animal cruelty and inhumane practices by the Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company in Chino, California.

“I told the American people and Congress that I was going to treat this issue with the utmost urgency, doing everything in my power to appropriately address this problem and work to strengthen consumer confidence in our food supply,” stated Schafer

Through evidence obtained by FSIS, the establishment did not consistently contact the FSIS public health veterinarian in situations in which cattle became non-ambulatory after passing ante-mortem inspection, which is not compliant with regulations. As a result, USDA called for the largest beef recall in American history.

“I am announcing that USDA will begin working on a proposed rule to prohibit the slaughter of all disabled non-ambulatory cattle, also known as ‘downer cattle’. The current rule, which focuses on cattle that went down after they have already passed pre-slaughter inspection, has been challenging to communicate and has, at times, been confusing to consumers,” proclaimed Schafer.

Shafer illustrated, “To maintain consumer confidence in the food supply, eliminate further misunderstanding of the rule and, ultimately,

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Export Requirement Updates



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

Switzerland

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

Helpful Resource

E-mail Alert Service - FSIS' e-mail alert service provides subscribers automatic and customized access to selected food safety news and information.

Visit www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/Email_Subscription/index.asp to sign up for agency e-mail alerts.

Shafer's Statement on Downer Cattle...

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to make a positive impact on the humane handling of cattle, I believe it is sound policy to simplify this matter by initiating a complete ban on the slaughter of downer cattle that go down after initial inspection.”

This action is expected to provide additional efficiencies to food safety inspection by removing the step that requires the inspection workforce to determine when non-ambulatory cattle are safe to slaughter.

To view Secretary Shafer's complete statement, visit www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?contentidonly=true&contentid=2008/05/0131.xml.

FSIS to Hold Regulatory Education Workshop in Houston

FSIS will hold regulatory education workshops for owners and operators of small and very small plants in Texas on June 10.

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, *E. coli* O157:H7 workshops, and the following notices:

- 65-07, *Notice of Reassessment for Escherichia coli O157:H7 Control and Completion of a Checklist for all Beef Operations*;
- 66-07, *Multiple Follow-Up Sampling After FSIS Positive Escherichia coli O157:H7 Results*; and
- 68-07, *Routine Sampling and Testing of Raw Ground Beef Components Other Than Trim and Imported Raw Ground Beef Components for Escherichia coli O157:H7*.

The June 10 session will be held at the Intercontinental Hotel - Houston, 2222 West Loop, Houston, Texas from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

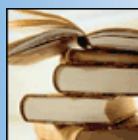
To register by phone, call (800) 336-3747. Online registration forms and information about upcoming sessions can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp. Pre-registration is encouraged, but not required.

Food Defense Plans



It's 69 days until FSIS' survey and the Agency will provide additional outreach initiatives to assist slaughter and processing plants to develop a functional food defense plan .

A documented set of procedures will improve an establishment's ability to respond quickly.



Visit FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Defense_&_Emergency_Response/Guidance_Materials/index.asp to review guidelines for completing a functional defense plan.



Learn more about basic food safety principles by visiting FSIS' facts sheets at www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/index.asp.

FSIS Provides Q&A's for Food Defense Plans

FSIS will conduct a survey on August 1 to determine how many FSIS-regulated slaughter and processing plants have voluntarily adopted functional food defense plans.

To assist plants in developing and using food defense plans, common Q&A's have been posted to *askFSIS* on the Agency's Web site. Visit http://askfsis.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/askfsis.cfg/php/enduser/std_alp.php and select "Food Defense Plans in FSIS Inspected Facilities".

Through *askFSIS* customers can receive information on technical and policy questions. Visitors can submit inquiries, check the status of a request, or revisit previously saved information.

There are currently no regulatory requirements for an establishment to develop a plan; however, FSIS strongly encourages establishments to maintain a food defense plan. A good food defense plan helps to identify steps that will help minimize the risk that food products in an establishment will be intentionally contaminated or tampered with and it also increases preparedness.

The Agency is expecting to see a goal of a 50% adoption rate since the prior two surveys in which the adoption rate was less than 50%. Ultimately, FSIS is expecting industry to reach a goal of at least 90% of plants adopting functional food defense plans in order to stave off the agency's move forward with rulemaking that will mandate functional food defense plans.

Look to future issues of the *FSIS Constituent Update* and visit FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Defense_&_Emergency_Response/Guidance_Materials/index.asp to review guidelines for completing a functional defense plan.

Got Food Safety Questions?

Visit "Ask Karen" at www.fsis.usda.gov. Click on "I Want To ... Ask A Food Safety Question"

Call the **USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline: 1-888-MPHOTLINE (1-888-674-6854)**

