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FSIS Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

FSIS Publishes Final Rule Prohibiting Processing of “Downer” Cattle

FSIS issued a news release on July 12 announcing a permanent prohibition on the slaughter of cattle that are unable to stand or walk (“downer” cattle) when presented for pre-slaughter inspection. The inability to stand or walk can be a clinical sign of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

The rule, which was published in the *Federal Register* on July 13, combines and makes permanent two interim final rules that had been in effect since January 12, 2004. Those rules prohibited for human consumption non-ambulatory “downer” cattle and cattle tissue identified as specified risk materials (SRMs); and banned the use of high-pressure stunning devices that could drive SRM tissue into the meat. The final rule becomes effective on October 1.

A third interim final rule that established requirements for Advanced Meat Recovery

systems will be finalized separately.

“This final rule further strengthens our public health controls at slaughter plants across the United States,” said Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond. “Less than three weeks after the December 2003 BSE detection in an imported cow, USDA moved quickly and decisively to put in place interim rules that greatly reduced the risk of human exposure. Experience has borne-out that these interim steps were correct and should be made permanent.”

Under the rule, cattle that are injured after they pass pre-slaughter inspection will be re-evaluated to determine their eligibility for slaughter. Veal calves that cannot stand because they are tired or cold may be set apart and held for treatment and re-inspection.



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Export Requirement Updates



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

Cuba

Japan

Malaysia

Russia

Taiwan

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

Final Rule on Downer Cattle ...

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The rule requires that spinal cord must be removed from cattle 30 months of age and older at the place of slaughter. It also mandates that records must be maintained when beef products containing SRMs are moved from one federally inspected establishment to another for further processing.

Countries that have received the internationally recognized BSE status of “negligible risk” are not required to remove SRMs because their system controls

prevent the introduction and spread of BSE.

FSIS will conduct outreach sessions with industry to ensure that the provisions of the final rule are fully understood by all affected establishments.

The final rule is available on FSIS’ Web site at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/Federal_Register_Publications_&Related_Documents/index.asp.

State of New Mexico to Come Under Federal Inspection

FSIS published a final rule on July 13 in the *Federal Register*, titled, *Designation of the State of New Mexico under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and Poultry Products Inspection Act*.

The rule announces that FSIS is designating New Mexico as a state to receive federal inspection

for meat and poultry products.

The final rule, which is effective on August 13, is available on FSIS’ Web site at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Frame/FrameRedirect.asp?main=http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FRPubs/2007-0023.htm>.

FSIS to Hold Meeting on Public Health-Based Slaughter Inspection

FSIS will hold a public meeting on August 7 to discuss public health-based slaughter inspection. This meeting will address *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* and other public health concerns.

The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the George

Mason University, School of Public Policy, 3401 Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22201.

The George Mason University campus is located near the Virginia Square Metro Station on Metro’s Orange Line for participants attending in person.

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Codex Re-Elects Hulebak as Vice Chairperson

Dr. Karen Hulebak, senior advisor for scientific affairs at FSIS, was re-elected as vice chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. This announcement was made during the 29th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission which was held from July 3-7, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Over the past few years, Hulebak's drive and dedication have been noted on several occasions. "The United States and the international community are fortunate to have someone of Dr. Hulebak's experience and expertise in this important role," said Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond. "I commend Dr. Hulebak for her previous work on Codex issues and look forward to the progress the Commission will make under her leadership."

Codex was created in 1963 by two United Nations organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Codex develops food standards, guidelines and codes of practice in order to protect the health of consumers, ensure fair food trade practices and promote coordination of food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Public Meeting ...

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In addition, the agency is planning to establish an audio conference for participants outside of the Washington, D.C., area.

An agenda for the meeting has been posted to FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov. Phone-in and registration information or

changes to the agenda or location for the meeting will also be posted on the Web site.

Look for more information on FSIS' Web site and in future issues of the *FSIS Constituent Update*.

NACMCF Subcommittees to Hold Public Meetings

The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) subcommittees will hold public meetings in August.

The subcommittee on the Determination of the Most Appropriate Technologies for the FSIS to Adopt in Performing Routine and Baseline Microbiological Analyses will hold public meetings on August 6, from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.; August 7, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and August 8, from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

The purpose of these meetings is to develop guidance and recommendations for FSIS to consider on improving laboratory and in-plant testing methods for pathogens and indicator organisms.

This project will assist the agency with its goal of moving into the next generation of microbiological testing methods and will focus

on exploring the utility of new technologies.

The subcommittee on the Assessment of the Food Safety Importance of *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* will hold public meetings on August 21-23, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The purpose of these meetings is to continue discussions toward determining the potential for transmission of *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis*, a suspect causative agent for Crohn's Disease, via foods, and the importance of this organism as a food safety concern.

The subcommittee on Parameters for Inoculated Pack/Challenge Study Protocols will hold public meetings on August 30-31, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The purpose of these meetings is to begin discussions toward the

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FSIS to Hold Web Seminars for Small and Very Small Plants

FSIS will hold a Web seminar on July 19 as part of its initiative to provide outreach to small and very small plants.

The seminar will review agency compliance guidelines for controlling *E. coli* O157:H7. The seminar will be held from 7 to 8 p.m. Registrations will be accepted through July 13.

A seminar representative will contact persons who register to attend the week of the seminar with instructions on how to join the event.

To register by phone, call (800) 336-3747 or send an e-mail to OutreachTSC@fsis.usda.gov.

Online registration forms and information about upcoming Web seminars can be found at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp.

NACMCF Public Meetings ...

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development of recommendations for the appropriate criteria for inoculated pack/challenge studies and to determine if a food requires time/temperature control for food safety.

The discussions will also include the appropriate uses of mathematical growth and inactivation models.

All of the meetings will be held at the Aerospace Building, 901 D Street, SW., Room 369, Washington, D.C.

To register, contact Sharon Oatman at (202) 690-6556 or Sharon.Oatman@fsis.usda.gov.

For security reasons, all persons wishing to attend must register in advance.

FSIS to Hold Regulatory Education Sessions in Dallas, New Mexico and Illinois

FSIS will hold regulatory education sessions on July 17 and 18 in Dallas, New Mexico and Illinois for the owners and operators of small and very small plants.

The July 17 session will cover a regulatory walk-through of sanitation standard operating procedures, hazard analysis and critical control point and rules of practice regulations. This session will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., at the Crowne Plaza Suites Dallas Park Central, 7800 Alpha Road, Dallas, Texas.

The July 18 sessions will be held at the following locations:

- Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown Hotel, 2600 Louisiana Blvd, NE., Albuquerque, N.M., from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

This session will cover a regulatory walk-through of

sanitation performance standard regulations and food defense.



- Holiday Inn Oak Brook Hotel, 17 West 350 22nd Street, Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

This session will cover a regulatory walk-through of sanitation standard operating procedures, hazard analysis and critical control point and rules of practice regulations.

To register by phone, call (800) 336-3747.

Online registration forms and information about upcoming sessions can be found at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp.

The Big Thaw - Safe Defrosting Methods for Consumers

Uh oh! You're home and forgot to defrost something for dinner. You grab a package of meat or chicken and use hot water to thaw it fast.

But is this safe? What if you remembered to take food out of the freezer, but forgot and left the package on the counter all day while you were at work?

Neither of these situations are safe, and these methods of thawing lead to foodborne illness. Food must be kept at a safe temperature during "the big thaw." Foods are safe indefinitely while frozen.

However, as soon as food begins to defrost and becomes warmer than 40° F, any bacteria that may have been present before freezing can begin to multiply.

Foods should never be thawed or even stored on the counter, or defrosted in hot water. Food left above 40° F (unrefrigerated) is not at a safe temperature.

Visit FSIS' Web site at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Big_Thaw/index.asp to learn more about safe defrosting methods.

FSIS Issues Notice and Directive

FSIS issued Notice 42-07 on July 11 titled, *Contents of Noncompliance Records*. The notice provides clarification to FSIS inspection program personnel on standardized language or "tag lines" used on FSIS Form 5400-4, *Noncompliance Record*.

The agency issued this notice in response to questions that have been raised through supervisory channels and in Food Safety Regulatory Essentials classes.

Inspection program personnel are not to use standard phrases that attempt to characterize the public health context of the noncompliance. The language must cite specific regulations with which the establishment

has failed to comply and provide a description of the event that constitutes the noncompliance.

The agency also issued Directive 10,800.1 on July 12 titled, *Procedures for Residue Sampling, Testing, and Other Responsibilities for the National Residue Program*.

This directive instructs inspection program personnel about how to perform residue sampling, testing and verification procedures in accordance with the National Residue Program.

The notice and directive are available on FSIS' Web site at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index.asp.

**To submit comments or questions,
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