



FSIS Constituent Update

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Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Security

Acting Under Secretary for Food Safety Testifies Before the House Agriculture Subcommittee

Acting Under Secretary Dr. Merle Pierson testified before the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee on March 2 in support of the President's budget request of \$849.7 million for fiscal year 2006 for FSIS.

"As we begin another new year at USDA, I am proud to emphasize several areas where we have used science based policies to effectively protect the health and well being of millions of consumers worldwide," Pierson said in his testimony.

Pierson discussed the decrease in the number of pathogen related recalls over the past year and credited the use of risk assessments, working with partners along the farm-to-table continuum, and basing policies on sound science in reducing *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella* controls. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that illnesses caused by *Salmonella Typhimurium*, typically associated with meat and poultry, decreased by 38 percent from 1996 to 2003. Human illnesses caused by *E. coli* O157:H7, often associated with ground beef, declined 42 percent from 1996 to 2003.

Pierson also discussed food security. Over the past several years FSIS has strengthened its focus on both intentional and unintentional contamination by conducting vulnerability assessments. Specifically for food security, vulnerability assessments have provided a solid foundation from which FSIS has launched many important initiatives to safeguard the food supply from any intentional threats.

To read the testimony in its entirety visit:

www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Testimony_Pierson_030205/

Export Requirement Updates

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

Canada

Russia

Taiwan

Complete information is available online at:

[www.fsis.usda.gov/
Regulations_&_Policies/
Export_Information/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/)



Time Out for Food Safety

For USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline, the approach of spring usually means that St. Patrick's Day dinner preparations across the country will spark questions about the safe handling, storage and preparation of corned beef and all the trimmings. But food safety involves more than the "luck of the Irish."

Why Eat Corned Beef on St. Patrick's Day?

Originally corned beef and cabbage was a traditional dish served for Easter dinner in rural Ireland. The beef, which was salted or brined during the winter to preserve it, could then be eaten after the long, meatless Lenten fast.

Since the advent of refrigeration, the trend in Ireland is to eat fresh meats. Today this peasant dish is more popular in the United States than in Ireland. Irish-Americans and lots of other people eat it on St. Patrick's Day, Ireland's principal feast day, as a nostalgic reminder of their Irish heritage.

Package Dating and Storage Times

Uncooked corned beef in a pouch with pickling juices which has a "sell-by" date or no date may be stored five to seven days in the refrigerator, unopened. Products with a "use-by" date can be stored unopened in the refrigerator until that date. Drained and well wrapped, an uncooked corned beef brisket may be frozen for one month for best quality. The flavor and texture will diminish with prolonged freezing but the product is still safe. After cooking, corned beef may be refrigerated for about three to four days and frozen for about two to three months.

Preparation

Corned beef requires long, moist cooking. "Fork-tender" is a good indication of doneness, but use a meat thermometer to be sure. Cook until the internal temperature has reached at least 160 degrees F.

Corned beef may still be pink in color after cooking. This does not mean it is not done. Nitrite is used in the curing process. This fixes pigment in the meat and affects the color.

Allow the brisket to stand for about ten minutes after removing from the heat. This will make it easier to slice, and it is best sliced diagonally across the grain of the meat.

For more information visit Ask Karen and type your food safety question online at:

www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/Ask_Karen/



Holiday Food Safety Tips

The following are cooking times for corned beef that is not frozen at the time of cooking:

Oven: Set oven at 350 degrees. Place brisket fat-side up. Barely cover the meat with water and keep the container covered. Cook about one hour per pound.

Stove Top: Place brisket fat-side up in a large pot and cover it with water. Bring the water to a boil; then reduce the heat and simmer, allowing about one hour per pound.

Slow Cooker: Add 1-1/2 cups of water or enough to cover meat. Cover and cook on high setting for the first hour of cooking. Then cook for 10 to 12 hours on the low setting or 5 to 6 hours on high.

Microwave: Cook 20 to 30 minutes per pound. Place brisket in a casserole dish and add 1-1/2 cups of water. Cover with lid or vented plastic wrap and microwave on medium-low (30 percent power) for half the estimated time. Turn meat over and rotate dish. Microwave on high for remainder of time or until fork tender.

Certification of Inedible Animal Products

FSIS provides businesses and establishments with certification services under the Agricultural Marketing Act, 7 U.S.C. 1622 and 1624. Certification services are available only for livestock and poultry products identified by FSIS in 9 CFR 351, *Certification of Technical Animal Fats for Export* and 9 CFR 355, *Certified products for dogs, cats, and other carnivora; inspection, certification, and identification as to class, quality, quantity, and condition*. FSIS does not have authorization to provide certification services under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) or the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA). In addition, FSIS is not authorized to provide certification services for any non-food animal products.

FSIS Notice 17-05 states that FSIS personnel are not to perform certification services for any products other than those specifically identified in 9 CFR 351 and 355. If establishments or businesses request certification services for inedible animal products not specifically identified in FSIS regulations, such as inedible livestock hides, FSIS program employees are to refer the establishment or business to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services, Import and Export Products Staff at (301) 734-3277 to arrange for the service and obtain the necessary forms.

Save the Date: Technical Meeting for *Salmonella* spp. and the *Clostridium perfringens* Risk Assessments

FSIS will hold a public meeting to present and discuss two draft risk assessments. The first is a quantitative risk assessment of *Salmonella* in ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products. The second is a quantitative risk assessment of *Clostridium perfringens* and *Clostridium botulinum* in RTE and heat-treated, but not RTE, products.

The public meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2005, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. It will be held at the Holiday Inn on The Hill at 415 New Jersey Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20001. A tentative agenda and the draft risk assessments will be available on the FSIS Web site soon. More information will be provided as the date approaches.

THIS WEEK'S HOT WEB LINKS

FSIS Food Safety Institute of the Americas

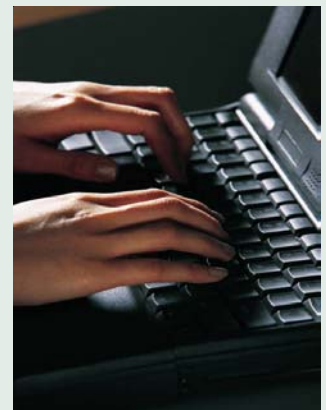
[www.fsis.usda.gov/
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FSIS Careers

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FSIS Consumers and Educators

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FSIS Issues Time and Temperature Tables for Cooking Ready-To-Eat Poultry Products

FSIS has issued Notice 16-05 to announce the availability of a compliance guideline, *Time and Temperature Tables for Cooking Ready-To-Eat (RTE) Poultry Products*. This guideline provides updated time and temperature tables for cooking ready-to-eat poultry products (9CFR 381.150).

The guideline discusses new data on increased time at a specific temperature to achieve a given level of reduction of *Salmonella* in poultry. However, establishments have been utilizing the cooking temperatures for poultry outlined in Appendix A for a number of years. FSIS is not rescinding the guidance for poultry in Appendix A, but an establishment needs to take this new data into consideration. An establishment can continue to use Appendix A within its process and should be conducting on-going verification to confirm that the process is being effectively controlled. FSIS will continue to collect verification samples for RTE products. If an establishment is using Appendix A, and FSIS collects an RTE sample that is positive for *Salmonella*, the establishment would be required under 417.3(b) to support its decision within its hazard analysis. In light of this new information, it is advisable that establishments using Appendix A verify their process on an on-going basis to ensure that *Salmonella* is being controlled effectively. The time and temperature tables are available at:

www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/RTE_Poultry_Tables.pdf

Upcoming Food Security Training

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are providing a food security awareness training program, *Protecting the Food Supply from Intentional Adulteration: An Introductory Training Session to Raise Awareness*. It is intended for Federal, State, local, and tribal food-industry regulators, school food authorities, and nutrition assistance program operators and administrators. The training is free and available online and at training courses offered across the country.

The first training session will be held on March 22 in Atlanta, Ga. The registration deadline is March 11. The course lasts approximately 6 hours (8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.). Space is limited and registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please contact Anne Roberts at 202-488-6609 or at anne.b.roberts@saic.com for further details.

The online course is available at: www.fda.gov/ora/training/orau/FoodSecurity/default.htm. Please contact Sebastian Cianci at 301-436-2291 or at Sebastian.Cianci@cfsan.fda.gov for more information regarding accessing on-line training.

To submit comments or questions, contact the editor at:

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



The USDA Food Safety Mobile: Taking Food Safety Education on the Road

The USDA Food Safety Mobile travels continuously throughout the United States to educate consumers about the risks associated with mishandling food and steps they can take to reduce their risk of foodborne illness. The food safety mobile's next dates and locations are as follows:

March 19, 2005

Albertson's Grocery Store
(St. George, UT)

April 8-10, 2005

Clark County Fair & Rodeo
(Logandale, Nev.)