

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

Applying the Mark of Inspection to Product Tested for an Adulterant: Guidelines for Industry for Holding Products When Sampled

Purpose

This briefing paper is provided to update the Committee on the actions that the Agency has taken regarding the June 16-17, 2005, Committee recommendations.

Background

In June 2004, FSIS presented to the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection (NACMPI) an issue concerning whether FSIS should grant the mark of inspection to product that has been tested for an adulterant until the Agency has received the results of the testing. The Committee considered the issue and its impact on small and very small establishments and made a number of recommendations to the Agency. The Committee did not reach a consensus on whether the Agency should effect a test and hold policy for product it samples for adulterants. It recommended that the Agency continue to encourage plants to develop a plan for holding products when they are sampled for adulterants. The Committee further recommended that FSIS provide guidance to plants regarding holding products, and that FSIS should work with the industry on strategies that would mitigate some of the practical problems associated with holding products.

FSIS considered the advice of the Committee. The Agency met with industry about this issue. As a result, a group of industry trade associations drafted guidance for establishments on holding products when the Agency samples. The Agency also drafted guidelines focused on providing practical advice to small and very small establishments for holding products when the Agency samples for adulterants. At the June 2005 meeting, the Agency sought advice on the most effective way to provide the guidance to industry, especially to small and very small plants.

At its June 2005 meeting, the Committee recommended that:

- FSIS refrain from issuing its own guidelines at this time, but instead, review the industry guidelines to ensure that they conform to applicable laws, regulations and policies;
- Industry issue its guidelines after FSIS review, and work with the Agency to ensure widespread distribution, especially to small and very small plants; and
- FSIS should monitor the effectiveness of the industry guidance on an ongoing basis and take appropriate actions in response to the findings of the evaluation,

ranging from recommendations for improving the guidelines to formal Agency action.

Status

The industry finalized its guidelines and the Agency found no objection to their issuance. The industry has issued its guidelines. The Agency is working with the industry group to disseminate the guidelines as widely as possible to the targeted audience – small and very small plants – and is planning an evaluation of the guidelines’ effectiveness.

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