

FSIS Regulations

From: DRLOSTRICH@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, July 23, 2003 11:58 PM
To: FSIS Regulations
Subject: Opposition to Docket No. 02-015DF

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FSIS.Regulations@usda.gov, Attention: FSIS Docket Clerk.

Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service

9 CFR Part 381

02-015DF-19
02-015DF
Donald R. Levan

[Docket No. 02-015DF]

RIN 0583-AC97

Addition of Australia and New Zealand to the List of Foreign Countries Eligible to Import Poultry Products (Ratite Only) Into the United States

Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA
FISI Docket Clerk
Docket 02-015DF, Room 102
Cotton Annex, 300 C Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Gentlemen,

I am responding to the above proposal to lift import restrictions for ratites and ratite products from Australia and New Zealand. I am very much "OPPOSED" to doing this.

I am the proprietor of a small business that warehouses and distributes ostrich meat in the state of Pennsylvania. I assist a handful of ostrich farmers/ranchers in Pennsylvania to market their ostrich meat.

I am aware American ostrich farmers are struggling, like all American farmers, at this time, to keep their farming businesses in tact. They raise their birds for both meat and leather. And, the industry is now beginning to grow domestically in this country. Ostrich meat is a very healthy red meat poultry that is high in nutrition, high in iron, and low in fat and cholesterol. The birds in Pennsylvania, like most American ostrich, are raised without added antibiotics, growth hormones or animal by-products.

It is of prime importance that Pennsylvania ostrich farmers be able to sell their ostrich meat and meat products, their hides and leather products, their feathers and their eggs for a reasonable price within the American economy in order to remain in the ostrich business.

Unlike other poultry, the ostrich requires 12 - 14 months of growth to be ready for marketing. That represents a considerable investment of time, money, and resources, all of which are in short supply to American ostrich farmers who get no subsidy from the U.S. government. And now, our own government is going to essentially provide a form of subsidy to the Australian and New Zealand ostrich producers by opening the American market to them. Any foreign ostrich meat offered to the American consumer at prices lower than what American producers charge for their ostrich meat will be greatly detrimental to the American industry.

Members of the American Ostrich Association (AOA) have worked with the USDA, FDA, state and national Farm Bureaus, individual state departments of agriculture, colleges and universities, and state and federal legislators to enact legislation for

the safety, control and regulation of ratite processing and marketing. The

AOA is currently working with the USDA in getting legislation written to cover ratites in the GIPSA. The AOA is doing everything it can to ensure our production and processing facilities are following established rules and regulations, not only to produce a superior product, but to ensure the American public, which buys the products, are receiving a safe and wholesome product. The importation of Australian and New Zealand products can only serverly undermine all these efforts.

All American ratite growers (emu and ostrich) will be hurt enormously by passage of an Agreement to lift the import restrictions with Australia and New Zealand.

You are requested to reconsider the proposal to lift import restrictions for ratites and ratite products from Australia and New Zealand and withdraw this proposed rule.

Respectfully yours,
Donald R. Levan, Proprietor
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Member of the American Ostrich Association since 1983
