

Weaver Enterprises

2111 Winchester Road
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Sub: Docket02-015DF

July 20, 2003

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

02-015DF-46
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Ken Weaver

Dear Sir or Madam:

I just returned from the annual symposium of the American Emu Association. There, I learned of the upcoming action to add Australia and New Zealand to the list of foreign countries eligible to import poultry products (ratite only) into the United States.

I am an emu farmer and have been for about 9 years. The emu business has slowly been making progress in establishing itself with meat, oil, and hide products. The industry has developed some standards for emu producers as a means of self-regulation. The oil standards are of utmost importance, as we must make sure that the products brought to the market contain only the highest quality emu oil. The American Emu Association has an emu oil certification program that oil processors voluntarily use to assure and document the quality of every batch of oil.

The action proposed by the FSIS will make it more difficult for the American emu industry to establish a highly reliable line of consumer products for two reasons. First, Australia and New Zealand will likely flood the USA with products at a time when the American emu industry is developing this alternative agricultural product stream. That action could severely damage the American Emu Industry and the farmers and ranchers involved in ratite agricultural enterprises. Second, there is no requirement for the imported ratite products to meet the quality standards established. It is likely poor quality products (especially emu oil) will find their way into products and tarnish the valuable reputation we are working so hard to develop. One negative news report takes months or years to overcome.

Therefore, I strongly oppose the final rule proposed by FSIS and request the ruling be struck down. Please do not take this action against the developing American ratite agricultural industry.

Sincerely,



Ken Weaver
Owner
Weaver Enterprises