



**National Steak
and Poultry**

RECEIVED
FSIS DOCKET ROOM

Innovators of Marinated Menu Items - 4 PM 3:49

February 23, 1999

FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket No. 97-068N
USDA – FSIS
Room 102, Cotton Annex
300 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3700

Dear Docket Clerk:

We would like to comment on the proposed FSIS Policy on Non-intact Raw Beef Products contaminated with *E. coli O157:H7*. National Steak and Poultry is a further processor of beef in the form of needled, injected and marinated frozen beef steaks to the restaurant trade. We further process over 25 million lbs. of tri-tip beef a year as well as other beef items. Consumer safety is our top priority. We support any policy that is scientifically sound and supported by peer reviewed scientific information. We feel the proposed policy on Non-Intact Raw Beef Products is based on neither of these and would not increase consumer safety of the product. To our knowledge or none that we are aware of historically and scientifically, there has never been an issue with needled or injected marinated beef. This policy would be onerous and burdensome to our business. Changing our patent pending process by not needling could negatively change our product and mean the loss of over half our business.

This policy would put us at the mercy of our suppliers (see attached letter) in trying to get product, and would increase our company exposure and liability for something out of our control. It would not increase consumer safety in our case, since our product is purchased by restaurants, and is cooked before it is eaten.

The beef industry, in response to the Pathogen Reduction Act is working on ways to eliminate *E. coli O157:H7*. We support the following pro-active measures:

- Livestock Production:
- a) Improve sanitation in feedlots (feed and water troughs; pens) to minimize transfer of *E. coli O157:H7* from one animal to another.
 - b) Changing beef cattle diet 1 week prior to slaughter (from concentrate to forage based ration) to reduce *E. coli O157:H7*.
- Processing:
- a) High Temperature Vacuuming: a hand held system that uses steam to destroy microorganisms on the beef carcass. This

C:\WINDOWS\Favorites\kent\USDA FSIS ltr.doc

method is helpful in reaching hard to get and troublesome areas of the carcass such as the brisket, round, and midline areas where knife cuts are made to remove the hide.

- b) Hot Water Pasteurization: showering of finished carcasses with 180° F water before entering chill cooler.
- c) Steam Pasteurization: finished carcasses pass through a slightly pressurized chamber and subjected to steam, destroying microorganisms.
- d) Lactic Acid Rinse: finished carcasses are rinsed with a lactic acid solution which has an antibacterial effect. This is most effective when used following hot water or steam pasteurization.

Education:

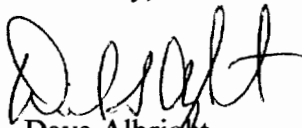
- a) Education of the end user of beef is a critical final control point for food safety.
- b) Prevention of cross contamination cannot be overemphasized.
- c) A few of the educational programs in place include: Beef Quality Assurance, Plating It Safe, ServSafe, and Fight-Bac.

Funding:

The Beef Industry Food Safety Council has allocated \$40 million to target research for eliminating *E. coli O157:H7*.

Considering the aforementioned information, we feel the proposed policy Non-Intact Raw Beef Products Contaminated With *E. coli O157:H7* is unnecessary, in lieu of all that is currently being done in industry to reduce *E. coli O157:H7*, and with the implementation of HACCP. The lack of historical problems does not warrant the need for such a policy. It would expose us to unneeded increased liability that could exceed the net value of the company without increasing the safety of our product. We cannot support this policy.

Sincerely,



Dave Albright
Chief Executive Officer

/cm

Attachment