

HARVIN

CHOICE MEATS, INC.

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Room 102 Cotton Annex Building
FSIS/USDA
Washington, DC 20250-3700

98-052P
98-052P-7
Sep A. Harvin, Jr.

March 24, 1999

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to strongly oppose any increase in the already outrageous charges imposed on us in the industry for overtime and Holiday charges.

These increases come during a most difficult time in our industry and are just another thorn in our side as we smaller plants struggle to survive.

Overtime mismanagement is common—see enclosures where overtime charges are duplicated and despite reasonable requests for redress, are ignored. See also the AAMP newsletter where others have the same problem with FSIS.

FSIS also enjoys many more holidays than the industry. We have six, which is typical for our area—FSIS has at least 12. There are times we have to close rather than pay the current high charges.

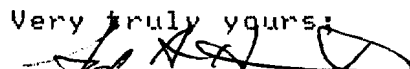
We have also had cases where our inspector was out all day and came back into the plant to charge a few minutes of overtime.

We have two plants, the smaller has both a Veterinarian and Inspector assigned. This is the subject of the enclosures where overtime duplication occurs. Our larger plant has a part time inspector. (??)

FSIS has already buried us with its SSOP/SOP and HAACP plans, which are adding dramatically to our costs while producing questionable benefits. At the same time more bacterial testing is being required of the plants, again adding to costs. While all of these programs sound nice, the facts are there was no real problem to begin with. Coupled with the above are more demands for immediate facilities upgrades, more costs

Please consider these comments. The FSIS is a bureaucracy out of control. Neither consumers nor the industry can afford their continued expansion.

Very truly yours:


Sep A. Harvin, Jr. President,
Harvin Choice Meats, Inc.
Willamsburg Packing Company, Inc.

cc: Senator Strom Thurmond

enclosures



Capitol Line-Up

P. O. Box 269, Elizabethtown, PA 17022
Phone: 717-367-1168 FAX: 717-367-9096 E-mail: aamp@aamp.com

Editor: Bernard F. Shire

March 15, 1999

Big Packers Propose Carcass Testing For *E. coli* O157:H7

In response to a plan by the **U.S. Department of Agriculture** in January to vastly expand the number of beef products in which *E. coli* O157:H7 would be considered an adulterant, large meat packers struck back with a plan of their own: to voluntarily test beef carcasses in slaughter plants for the presence of the pathogen. The proposal as outlined by **The Big Three** meat packers, who control 80 percent of beef slaughter in the U.S., would move sampling for *E. coli* O157:H7 upstream in meat plants, away from inspected and passed product in retail stores.

At the same time, the beef industry wants to set up a pilot program to test how effective this carcass-sampling would be. The proposal would also allow meat packers and the people to whom they sell product to qualify for reduced USDA sampling for O157:H7, under **FSIS Directive 10,010.1**, which sets guidelines for FSIS sampling in both plants and in retail stores. To an extent, it could help grinders, including AAMP members, who bear all of the responsibility if trimmings containing *E. coli* O157:H7 show up at their plants. Testimony was also presented against expanding the adulteration policy to mechanically tenderized and other non-intact steaks.

The plan may be a good one. But AAMP has a lot of questions, particularly as it would affect small beef slaughterers. AAMP's **Meat Inspection Committee** and the Association's members will be evaluating the plan. At the meeting, **Bernie Shire, AAMP Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs**, asked: How will this proposal affect small slaughterers, compared to big packers? When will ranchers and farmers clean up their animals, rather than putting total responsibility on packers? Would slaughterers who don't participate be discriminated against? Is there any scientific validity to testing beef carcasses for the pathogen? We have many more questions, as well. On behalf of the entire industry, Shire also asked **FSIS Administrator Tom Billy** for an extension of USDA's comment period deadline. Billy agreed, with the details to be worked out.

USDA Ups Overtime, Holiday Fees; AAMP Questions Inspection "Piling On"

If you work a lot of overtime or on holidays, or process species that USDA doesn't recognize, be prepared. FSIS is proposing to raise the fees for these services. The Agency says the higher fees are necessary due to Federal employee pay raises, and increased travel and overhead costs. Changes include: voluntary inspection (species USDA doesn't recognize) from \$32.88 to \$37 an hour, an increase of \$4.12 an hour. Overtime and holidays from \$33.76 to

\$36.84, a hike of \$3.08 an hour. Comments on this proposed rule are due by April 15, 1999. If you'd like a copy of this proposal, contact AAMP. We also have other questions. **Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman's National Advisory Committee on Meat & Poultry Inspection** advised USDA to stop overtime and holiday charges for plants operating under HACCP. What happened to that recommendation?

AAMP receives complaints from plants that get double-teamed by inspectors on holidays and during overtime periods. Not only do plants have to pay for inspection, but they get bilked twice as much as they should. We know from FSIS insiders that this happens frequently. USDA management needs to look into this abuse, and stop it!

We Can Send You Directive 7111.1 On New Performance Rules

If you make cooked beef, roast beef, cooked corned beef, fully and partially cooked meat patties and cooked poultry products, and you're planning to change your processes to follow these standards, rather than the old regulations, a Directive has been released telling inspectors how to enforce the new rules. The new standards for lethality (cooking) and stabilization (cooling) were effective March 8. You can continue to follow the old regulations. But if you change and you're operating under HACCP, you have to change your plan to reflect these changes. If you make fully cooked beef and poultry products, you have to address both cooking and cooling. If your product is partially cooked poultry, you only have to worry about the cooling standards. If you'd like a copy of the new Directive and the Performance Standards Rule, give us a call at AAMP

FSIS Takes Budget Request Up To The Hill – User Fees Again

Last week, the **Food Safety and Inspection Service** tried to convince skeptical members of Congress that its budget proposal for 2000 makes sense (now there's a challenge!). FSIS Chief Tom Billy & Co. made their pilgrimage to a budget hearing conducted by the **Agriculture Subcommittee** of the **House Appropriations Committee**. FSIS is planning to spend almost \$750 million on meat, poultry and egg inspection during the coming year, but the Agency was proposing to put up only \$150 million, with the rest, almost \$600 million coming from – you guessed it! – user fees that YOU and every other meat and poultry processor would have to pay! Reality never sinks through to these folks. Nor does the fact that Congress has rejected industry user fees time after time. While FSIS was going through the motions again, AAMP was contacting the members of the **House** and **Senate Budget** committees, asking them to hammer more nails into the user fee coffin!

AAMP Presents USDA With *Listeria* Guidelines

AAMP and nine other meat trade associations presented USDA-FSIS **Associate Administrator Maggie Glavin** with a set of proposed industry guidelines to control the outbreak of *Listeria* in ready-to-eat products, and Listeriosis in a number of people who have eaten food products, including meat. In a letter to USDA, AAMP said the goal of the new standards was to cut down outbreaks of *Listeria* and other pathogens in ready-to-eat products as much as possible.

January 11, 1999

USDA FSIS
6020 Six Forks Road
Raleigh, NC 27609
Dr. Abdul Choudry

Dear Dr. Choudry:

I trust you had a pleasant holiday season and look forward to an exciting new year as HAACP implementation proceeds.

The purpose of this letter is to request your consideration of what I feel are excessive overtime charges at our Williamsburg Packing Company, Est 4105 plant. This plant is classified as a very small plant and a good pork kill is 200 head in a long day. Assigned to this very small plant are both an inspector - Virginia Lesane and veterinarian, Dr. Jaime Penne. During the holiday season, overtime was needed and both of them chose to work during the same time, when one of them would have been more than capable. In the past overtime was shared between the inspector and veterinarian.

I have no problem with both of them being on duty, but honestly feel the double overtime an unreasonable charge for this small operation to bear. Please review the enclosed time sheets and note 17 1/4 duplicated overtime hours, estimated extra cost to us \$ 800.00.

In your absence, I called the office and discussed this with Geneva, but she was unable to make the policy decision required.

I respectfully ask that you review this matter and charge Williamsburg for only one overtime person. Thank you for considering this. May I hear from you soon ?

Sincerely,

Sep A. Harvin, Jr., President
Williamsburg Packing Company

cc: Dr. Karen L. Henderson

February 9, 1999

USDA FSIS
6020 Six Forks Road
Raleigh, NC 27609
Dr. Abdul Choudry

Dear Dr. Choudry:

This is a follow-up to my letter of January 11, 1999 concerning overtime excesses at our Williamsburg Packing Company, Est 4005.

		Lesane	Dr. Penne	
For week ending 12/19/98	M	1.0		
	T	.2		
	W	1.0	1.1	
	TH	.3	1.2	
	FR	.3	1.11	
	SA	9.3	9.3	CHARGES \$ 1071.88
	TOTAL	13.0	13.3	AVG/HR \$ 40.07
12/27/98	SU	5.0	8.0	
	M	2.0	2.1	
	T	1.1	1.1	
	W	---	1.3	CHARGES \$ 793.36
		8.1	13.1	AVG/HR \$ 36.90

DUPLICATED HOURS 15.75 HOURS @ \$36.90= \$581.18

Please review this data and I think you will agree that this small plant deserves a refund of at least the above excess charges. Thank you for a prompt response.

2/19 Carl M/Sg

Sincerely,

Sep A. Harvin, Jr., President
Williamsburg Packing Company

cc: Dr. Karen L. Henderson