



NATIONAL CHICKEN COUNCIL

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November 26, 2003

Ms. Diane Moore
FSIS Docket Clerk
Room 102
Cotton Annex Building, SW
Food Safety and Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250-3700
202/720-2025 – facsimile
202/205-0181 – telephone

99-017P
99-017P-1
William P. Roenigk

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FSIS DOCKET ROOM
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**Re: Docket #99-017P Proposal to Amend Definitions and Standards
for USDA Classes of Poultry**

Dear Ms. Moore:

The National Chicken Council (NCC) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the FSIS proposed rule of September 29, 2003 that would amend the definitions and standards for the official U.S. classes of poultry. NCC member companies produce, process and market about 95 percent of the young meat chicken in the United States and, therefore, are especially interested in the final rule that will result from the proposed amendments.

FSIS proposes to lower the age definitions for six classes of poultry as follows:

Class	Current Age Definition	Proposed Change
Rock Cornish game hen/ Cornish game hen	5 to 6 weeks	Less than 5 weeks
Broiler/fryer	Under 13 weeks	Less than 10 weeks
Roaster/roasting chicken	3 to 5 months	Less than 12 weeks
Capon	Under 8 months	Less than 4 months
Fryer-roaster turkey	Under 16 weeks	Less than 12 weeks
Young turkey	Under 8 months	Less than 6 months

NCC has no objections to the proposed changes for the definitions for the six classes of poultry.

FSIS proposes to delete the word "usually" from the age designation description for all poultry class standards. NCC has no objections to this deletion. NCC has no comment regarding FSIS' proposed changes for geese, guineas, and ducks.

FSIS proposes to delete the class of Rock Cornish fryer, roaster, and hen while retaining the names Rock Cornish game hen and Cornish game hen. NCC has no objections to this proposed change.

FSIS proposes a change for the roaster or roasting chicken class so that the breast bone cartilage of these birds "is" rather than "may be somewhat less flexible" than the breast bone cartilage of birds in the broiler/fryer class. NCC has no objections to the proposed change.

FSIS is proposing for greater consistency of wording certain editorial changes, such as "less than" rather than "under." NCC has no objections to these types of changes.

FSIS seeks comments regarding establishing ready-to-cook (RTC) carcass weights or maximum weight for poultry classes. FSIS cites roaster chickens with an RTC weight of five pounds or more as an example of this issue. Since this issue would require considerable consultation with various segments of the chicken industry, NCC requests that additional time be granted for making these types of determinations. Following these determinations, NCC would advise FSIS of the findings.

NCC understands FSIS will coordinate and consult with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) regarding the proposed changes since the poultry classes are incorporated into AMS' official U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry in conjunction with AMS' voluntary poultry grading service. NCC encourages FSIS to work closely with AMS so that any changes in the final rule are, in fact, fully compatible with AMS grading service.

NCC hopes its comments are helpful toward determining a final rule that will provide characteristics of marketed poultry are more accurate and more descriptive.

Sincerely,



William P. Roenigk
Senior Vice President

WPR:dw