

# SMA InfoMeat

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## FSIS Plans Meetings on Risk Based Inspection in Processing

FSIS will hold a series of technical public meetings to address specific issues raised by stakeholders during the development of risk-based inspection in processing. The first meeting will be held today, from 9 AM to 1 PM. FSIS will discuss the algorithm used to determine categories of inspection under RBI for processing establishments, use of public health significant non-compliance records and the proposed RBI timeline. A technical summit on food attribution, co-hosted by FSIS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, will be held on April 5, from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. The agency will invite experts to provide information and views on the definitions of attribution as well as state-of-the-art methods in collecting attribution data. The use of production volume data as a proxy for exposure is the topic for the meeting on April 25. The fourth meeting, slated for April 30, will focus on the use of industry data in the risk algorithm. Both meetings will be held from 9 AM to 1 PM. The most current expert elicitation on inherent product risk will be discussed at the fifth meeting, which will be held sometime in July, with details to be announced later. All of the meetings will be held in Room 244 of the George Mason University, Arlington Campus, located at 3401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22201. Stakeholders will also be able to participate through audio conference. Directions to the site, phone-in information, the agenda and other meeting materials will be posted on the FSIS website at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov), as well as any changes in meeting dates or times. Pre-registration for each meeting is encouraged. To register online, go to [www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&\\_Events/Meetings\\_&\\_Events/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Meetings_&_Events/index.asp), select the appropriate meeting and indicate whether you will be attending onsite at George Mason University or participating by phone. You may also register by contacting Sally Fernandez by phone at 202-690-6524, by fax at 202-690-6519, or by e-mail to [sally.fernandez@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:sally.fernandez@fsis.usda.gov). To access issue papers, background information, meeting transcripts, workshop presentations and reports in support of risk-based inspection in processing, go to [www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations\\_&\\_Policies/Risk\\_Based\\_Inspection/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Risk_Based_Inspection/index.asp).

## FSIS Launches New Website for Small, Very Small Plants

FSIS has added one more way to stay informed about small and very small plant issues with the launch of a web page dedicated to these establishment categories. A working group with representatives from the Office of Public Health Science, the Office of Policy, Program, and Employee Development and the Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach developed this page to address one of the key action items included in the FSIS Strategic Implementation Plan for Strengthening Small and Very Small Plant Outreach. The new web page covers topics such as current food safety resources, regulatory policies, contact information, compliance guidelines, common questions and export information. It also covers FSIS directives and notices, newsletters and magazines. One highlight is a feature titled "What Do You Need to Know Today?" which will change often to answer some of the questions most frequently asked by small and very small plants. Seven task-oriented links to hot topics and important resources for small and very small plants are also included. These links allow users to order small and very small plant resource materials, find information on risk-based inspection, view FSIS workforce training resources, import products, create a food defense plan, review guidance material in support of new technology and subscribe to newsletters. The user-friendly page is accessible from anywhere on FSIS' website. To access the page, go to [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov). The link for the page is located in the left column, under the pull-down tab for "Browse By Audience."

S O U T H W E S T M E A T A S S O C I A T I O N

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## Creekstone Farms Wins BSE Testing Case

According to a report in *The Wichita Eagle*, U.S. District Judge James Robertson handed down a ruling last Thursday that Creekstone Farms Premium Beef and other meatpackers have the right to test all the animals they slaughter for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). However, the federal judge immediately put his ruling on hold, pending a possible appeal by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). If the government does not appeal by June 1, the ruling will take effect. In Arkansas City, Kansas, Creekstone general manager Kevin Pentz called the ruling a "moral victory," but he added that he is expecting an appeal. "This ruling is still important to us," Pentz said. "We've been waiting almost a year since the lawsuit was put into place and the judge has had all the final motions in his hand since December 16." Creekstone first filed suit in March 2006 after the government denied its right to conduct testing in the laboratory it built at its plant. USDA most recently filed a motion to have the case declared moot because of the re-opening of trade with Japan, the primary customer that Creekstone hoped to regain with testing. Pentz said that testing would still be an advantage for the company, which sells premium Black Angus beef, because it would meet standards in both Japan and South Korea. BSE testing could lead to an increase in sales to those countries and in the price the company could get for its product. Currently, only boneless beef may be imported and South Korea recently halted all imports after finding a bone fragment in a shipment. Creekstone has contended that if it were allowed to test all animals, which both countries want, such restrictions would not apply. The U.S. has only confirmed three cases of BSE, the first in an imported cow in December 2003. That discovery resulted in the closing of borders worldwide to U.S. beef. Creekstone Farms had been shipping almost 35% of its beef to Japan and attributed losses of almost \$200 a head to the loss of the export market. It normally slaughters 4,000 cattle a week. Initially, the USDA ramped up testing for BSE to 1,000 tests per day, focusing on downers and animals at the highest risk. It recently cut back to a surveillance program that corresponds to the extremely low prevalence of the disease in the U.S.

## FSIS Eliminates Minimal, Limited Inspection

Today FSIS issued Notice 22-07, "Elimination of 'Minimal' and 'Limited' Inspection." This Notice suspends the FSIS programs that began in the 1970s called "minimal" and "limited" inspection for "certain qualified processing establishments" whereby inspection was "provided on a less than per shift basis." In this Notice, FSIS recognizes that these programs did not meet its "statutory obligation to visit each establishment at least once during each shift that the establishment operates." These programs are thus suspended and Part 6 of the Meat and Poultry Inspection Manual, which discusses the "minimal" and "limited" programs, is officially canceled. District Managers are to take steps to "implement this clarified policy in an expeditious manner" to ensure all processing establishments are inspected at least once per shift. Questions are to be directed to the Technical Service Center at 800-233-3935, but members who need help with this issue may also call the SMA office for advice and assistance. The Notice may be viewed at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/22-07.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/22-07.pdf).



### POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Creekstone Farms Premium Beef, of Arkansas City, Kansas, is accepting applications for the following:

**Controller** - Directs the company's accounting functions, including establishing/maintaining the firm's accounting principles, practices, procedures, and initiatives; prepares financial reports and presents findings and recommendations to top management. Requires a bachelor's degree and at least 5 years of experience. CPA preferred.

**Staff Accountant** - Compiles and analyzes financial information; develops integrated revenue/expense analyses, projections, reports, and presentations; creates and analyzes periodic reports and ensures accurate recording of financial data; identifies trends/developments in competitive environments and presents findings to senior management; performs financial forecasting and reconciliation of internal accounts. Requires a BS in accounting or finance and 1-3 years of related experience.

**Safety Manager** - Plans, implements, and coordinates programs to reduce or eliminate occupational injuries and illnesses; manages workers compensation activities, maintains OSHA log, submits required reports, manages cases and approves bills; ensures implementation of safety policies/procedures; compiles/analyzes/interprets statistical data related to exposure factors. BS in Occupational Safety, Industrial Technology, or related degree, 1-3 years safety coordination experience in a manufacturing environment, experience managing claims and an aggressive case management philosophy.

Submit resumes to: Creekstone Farms, Director of Human Resources, 604 Goff Industrial Park Rd., Arkansas City, KS 67005 or online at [careers@cfpbeef.com](mailto:careers@cfpbeef.com). Company physical and drug test required. EOE

## Office Holiday

The SMA office will be closed Friday, April 6 in observance of Good Friday.

Happy Easter!



## **Ruling Halts U.S. Horse Slaughter**

Operations stopped last week at the one remaining U.S. horse slaughter plant in Dekalb, IL after a U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia judge ruled Wednesday that it was illegal for horse slaughterhouses to pay USDA for voluntary inspection services. The USDA had agreed to allow paid voluntary inspection for the nation's three remaining horse slaughterhouses last year, after Congress cut off their funding for FSIS inspections in 2005. The Humane Society of the United States sued USDA, calling that arrangement a conflict of interest. As a result of the ruling, the USDA pulled its on-site inspectors and the plant was forced to cease operation. James Tucker, the general manager of the Belgian-owned Cavel plant, called the ruling "bizarre and outrageous," and said the funding arrangement did not alter the inspectors' ability to be critical. He called the ruling an "awful blow" to the 55 people employed at the DeKalb plant, which slaughters about 1,000 horses a week and generates \$30 million a year in foreign trade. The USDA did not seek an immediate injunction, according to Steven Cohen, a spokesman for the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. "The lawyers are reviewing the ruling, but the ruling was very clear and the judge's order was very clear and the department is complying," Cohen said. In a recent press release, the Animal Agriculture Alliance said anti-horse slaughter initiatives led by activist groups have already created an animal welfare crisis. They cited a mid-March *Associated Press* report indicating that thousands of horses in Kentucky and other parts of the country were starving due to the results of activist groups opposing horse slaughter. With the closing of horse slaughter plants, the price of horses has declined markedly. Rather than sell the horses, some owners are setting them free, others are letting them starve and, worse yet, refusing to call the veterinarian for perfectly treatable conditions. "This sad state of affairs is the direct result of the anti-horse slaughter movement, led by the vegan-led Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and other animal rights organizations," said Kay Johnson, Executive Vice President of the Animal Agriculture Alliance. "These groups claim to care about animal welfare, but when faced with an animal welfare disaster caused by their efforts, they callously insist that the market will sort itself out or, worse yet, coldheartedly dispute that this crisis exists, while leaving seriously underfunded local animal rescue operations to save animals. Johnson called for the federal government to intervene and stop vegan groups from using horses as "political pawns in the quest to impose their vegetarian agenda on our nation."

### **Briefly . . .**

FSIS Adjusts Dollar Limitations for Retail Store Exemptions: On Friday the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announced calendar year 2007 dollar limitations for retail stores that sell meat and poultry products and qualify for an exemption from federal inspection. Retail operations are not subject to inspection unless sales to hotels, restaurants and similar institutions exceed 25% of total sales or exceed the calendar year dollar limitation. The dollar limitations for meat and meat food products will remain \$55,100 in 2007, the same amount as in 2006. For poultry products, the dollar limitation will be reduced to \$44,400 from \$45,200. These adjustments are based on changes in the Consumer Price Index. More details pertaining to the changes in dollar limitations are available at [www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/2007\\_Notices\\_Index](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/2007_Notices_Index). For further information, contact John O'Connell, Regulations and Petitions Policy, Office of Policy, Program, and Employee Development, FSIS, USDA at 202-720-0345.

LPAI Confirmed in West Virginia: On Saturday the National Veterinary Services Laboratories confirmed that test results for samples collected from turkeys at a farm in West Virginia are indicative of exposure to an H5N2 avian influenza virus, consistent with low pathogenic strains of avian influenza, or LPAI, which are commonly found in birds and typically cause only minor sickness or no noticeable symptoms. LPAI viruses pose no risk to human health. "The samples were collected by an industry group as part of routine, pre-slaughter surveillance. The turkeys showed no signs of illness and there was no mortality. NVSL plans to run sequencing and pathogenicity tests to further identify the virus," Dr. John Clifford said in a press release. West Virginia officials will depopulate the affected turkey flock, which includes approximately 25,000 birds. While LPAI poses no risk to human health, USDA's policy is to eradicate all H5 and H7 subtypes because of their potential to mutate into highly pathogenic avian influenza.

EBG Offers Immigration Law Workshop: The law firm of Epstein, Becker, Green, Wickliff, & Hall, P.C. will hold "Coming to America: Immigration Update 2007," on Wednesday, May 2 from 8-10 AM, at the Crowne Plaza Houston - Downtown, 1700 Smith St., Houston, TX 77002. This workshop will cover everything employers need to know about the rapidly changing immigration laws, including: ICE enforcement actions, and employer sanctions for hiring of illegal workers; I-9 Compliance; using Social Security mismatches as evidence of employer knowledge of unauthorized workers; limitations of the Basic Pilot Employment Verification Program; the pros and cons of employer participation; white collar crime/litigation aspects of ICE Raids; and new State and Federal legislation governing the workplace. Event registration is \$35, plus \$4 valet parking. For more information and to register online, visit <http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=4cb2ee02-bad3-4430-bc08-e2b0f51fc490>.