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Canada Confirms 9th Case of BSE

Last Wednesday the Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirmed its ninth case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a mature Alberta bull that died on a farm last week. Dr. George Luterbach, the agency's senior veterinarian for Western Canada, said that the animal's death caused it to be identified as an "animal of interest" at the farm level as part of their national surveillance program. An investigation is under way to find other animals born within a year of the bull that may have been exposed to the same feed source, Luterbach said. Eight previous cases of BSE have been detected in Canada since May 2003, when the discovery of an Alberta cow with the disease caused the United States to close the border to Canadian cattle imports. The border reopened for beef from younger cattle within a few months, but live cattle have only been allowed to move across the border since July 2005. Five new BSE cases were discovered in Canada in 2006, including one in a cow born five years after safeguards were adopted to prevent the spread of the disease. Luterbach said that a small number of cases is not entirely unexpected, adding that other countries have seen a small number of "residual" cases after adopting strict feed regulations. A ban on using ruminant material in feed in Canada went into effect in 1997 to guard against the spread of BSE. A new, enhanced feed ban, which comes into effect on July 12, 2007, should see BSE eliminated from the national cattle herd within 10 years, according to the agency. New rules proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that would allow imports of older live Canadian cattle to resume are up for public review until March 12. Almost one-third of the Canadian beef herd and one-quarter of the total herd is estimated to have been born before 1998. Luterbach said he doesn't expect the latest case to have a negative impact on these plans. "What's most important is that there's safeguards, there's a stringent suite of measures in place to prevent and eradicate BSE," he said. "We are open and transparent with the United States." Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will dispatch an expert to Canada to help with the investigation. "Based on what I know at this time, I would not expect this Canadian detection to impact our trade with Canada," he said.

New User Fees Included in USDA Budget

The proposed budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture for fiscal 2008 once again introduces new user fees. A report in *Meatingplace.com* stated that the new budget includes fees totaling \$105 million through the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). FSIS will submit two legislative proposals that will tax industry for meat, poultry and egg inspection at an estimated cost of \$96 million. The first proposal would provide the authority to collect a licensing fee from establishments and generate \$92 million in new funds to offset appropriated funds beginning in fiscal 2009. The second proposal would provide the authority to collect user fees from plants that require additional inspection activities because of performance failures, such as retesting, recalls, or inspection activities linked to an outbreak. This proposal would generate an estimated \$4 million to offset appropriated funds beginning in FY 2009. APHIS will submit a legislative proposal that would permit collection of an estimated \$9 million in new user fees for Animal Welfare activities in 2008. These funds will be used to reduce the appropriation needs for fiscal 2009. (*J. Gregerson, meatingplace.com, 2/7/07*)

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OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES

SMA offers our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Mrs. Billie Mae Breitschopf Janecka, who passed away Saturday, February 3, 2007. Born September 28, 1926, in Cistern, she was a homemaker and a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and Catholic Daughters. In 1959, she and husband Felix Janecka founded J Bar B Sausage Company in Waelder, Texas. She is survived by a daughter and son-in-law, Joan and Ronald Beeman of Flatonia; a son and daughter-in-law, Danny and Noreen Janecka of Waelder; a sister, Lucille Ellis of Austin; grandchildren, Danny and Audra Janecka II, Amy and Jeff Cernosek, Jordan Beeman and Bethany Beeman; and great-grandchildren, Lane, Ali, and Cale Janecka, and Tristan and Kinley Cernosek. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Sacred Heart Catholic Church Building Renovation Fund, P.O. Box 186, Flatonia, TX 78941.

FSIS Posts 2006 Data on *E. coli* Testing in Raw Ground Beef

FSIS recently posted the microbiological data for *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7 testing in raw ground beef samples for calendar year 2006. This testing program was initiated in October 1994 and has become a key component of the agency's overall system for hazard analysis and critical control point verification. The 2006 microbiological data on *E. coli* is available on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.Coli_Testing_Results/index.asp.

NCBA Elects New Officers

North Carolina cattleman John Queen was elected president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) by peers at the Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show in Nashville last week. Queen is the owner of John Queen Farms, a third-generation cattle farm founded in 1917 near Waynesville in western North Carolina. His background in the beef industry includes cow/calf producer, stocker/backgrounder, feeder and grazer. He has also been an auction barn owner and operator, and is currently owner of Southeast Livestock Exchange, a video-telemarketing company. Queen said one of his primary goals is to continue NCBA's momentum in terms of membership growth. Paul Hitch of Guymon, OK was chosen as NCBA president-elect; Andy Groseta of Cottonwood, AZ will serve as vice-president; Steve Foglesong of Astoria, IL was elected as NCBA Policy Division chairman for 2007; Gary Voogt of Marne, MI was elected chairman of the Federation of State Beef Councils Division of NCBA for 2007; and Lytton, IA cattleman Alan Albright will serve as vice chair of the Federation Division.

FSIS Issues Notice on Removal of Visible Beef Tonsillar Material

Last week the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued verification instructions for inspection program personnel regarding the removal of tonsillar material from beef tongues. FSIS Notice 10-07, "Instructions for Verifying the Proper Removal of Visible Beef Tonsillar Material from Tongues by Use of Skinning Machines," addresses only the removal of tonsillar material by means of skinning machines. Inspection program personnel are to continue to follow the current instructions for the removal, segregation and disposition of tonsillar material by all other means. Complete removal of the visible tonsillar material is necessary because this material is considered a Specified Risk Material (SRM) in cattle of any age. The entire notice, with photographs, is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/10-07.pdf.



POSITION AVAILABLE

Food Safety Net Services, is a fast-growing private company seeking to hire an Auditing Specialist to work at our San Antonio, Texas facility. This individual will conduct food safety, animal welfare, regulatory, product evaluation, and customized audits for plants and processing facilities in the meat, pork, and poultry areas as well as other food industry areas. Please apply on our website @ www.food-safetynet.com. FSNS is an EOE.

SMA OFFICE CLOSED

Please note that the SMA office will be closed Thursday, February 15th while we attend our quarterly Board of Directors meeting.

We will be checking telephone messages regularly, so if you need to reach us, please leave your name and number and we'll return your call at our earliest opportunity.

Does Your HACCP Plan Need An Update? Are You Ready for an FSIS Team Review?

Register now for “Beyond Basics: HACCP Plan Improvement Workshop for Raw and Cooked Product Operations,” hosted by SMA, NMA, and the Texas A&M University Department of Animal Science, **March 29-30, 2007** at Texas A&M University.

Do you have decision-making documentation for your HACCP plan? Can you justify and defend your CCPs? Do you have all of your scientific supporting documentation on file? Can you support the frequency of your monitoring and verification activities? Is your inspector asking for information that you don't have? We can help you with these issues and answer your questions! This two day workshop will provide a review and evaluation of your company's HACCP plan, with hands-on help to improve it. The registration form and course outline are available on our website.

Sign up today!

Briefly . . .

SMA Welcomes Bobby Palesano: This week, SMA welcomes Mr. Bobby Palesano to our staff as Vice President of Technical Services. Bobby recently retired from the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service after over 40 years of federal service. He will be co-employed by the International HACCP Alliance, splitting his time between the Alliance and SMA. In his position at SMA, he will provide technical and regulatory assistance to member firms, assisting them with all regulatory compliance related issues as well as the development and implementation of food safety programs. Welcome aboard, Bobby!

New Cases of Bird Flu Emerge: Pakistan and South Korea both reported new bird flu cases in poultry on Saturday, underlining findings by the United Nations that this season's wave of the virus came mostly from domestic stock rather than migratory birds. David Nabarro, the U.N. coordinator for avian and human flu, was cited as saying that migrating birds carried the virus last season, probably from Mongolia to China and South Korea. On Saturday, health authorities in Pakistan confirmed H5N1 in the capital, Islamabad, in the country's third case this week. So far, there have been no cases of people being infected with the virus in Pakistan. In South Korea, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry stated that a new outbreak of highly-virulent bird flu has been confirmed in South Korea's central city of Anseong, south of Seoul, at a chicken breeding farm. The government dispatched a team of quarantine specialists to support the containment efforts including destruction of over 1,000 chickens within three km of the affected farm. All livestock within a 10-km radius will be restricted from transfer, the ministry said.

Senators Warn S. Korea over Beef: South Korea's persistent refusal to accept U.S. beef imports threatens congressional support for a bilateral free-trade agreement, U.S. senators warned Thursday ahead of critical talks next week. Seven senators from beef-producing states sent a reminder to Seoul's ambassador in Washington Thursday that reversing the import ban is vital for congressional endorsement of any free-trade pact. “Failure to open your market to this safe product will make it difficult” for Congress to pass a final FTA with Korea, the senators said in the letter.

Ethanol Divides Corn, Livestock Interests: The best customers for U.S. corn farmers are U.S. livestock producers, who buy half the corn produced in the U.S. as feed for cattle, hogs and poultry. But with corn prices more than doubling over the last six months because of the booming demand for ethanol, beef and pork producers are starting to take positions at odds with their friends in the corn industry. In particular, they are opposing tax and trade policies that offer incentives for corn-based ethanol production. Last weekend, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association adopted a tentative resolution calling on Congress to let current tariffs on imported ethanol expire. They also said Congress should let lapse a tax credit to U.S. companies that blend either foreign or domestic ethanol with other fuels. The National Pork Producers Council is expected to consider similar resolutions at its annual meeting in March.

*Don't Forget!
Wednesday is
Valentine's Day!*

POSITION AVAILABLE

PAK QUALITY FOODS in San Angelo, TX is adding to our warehouse management team. Minimum requirement is experience as either a shipping foreman or lead man. Top candidates need experience as a manager or foreman over the entire operation of a meats distribution warehouse. UPC scanning experience a plus. Salary based on qualifications with 401K and insurance. Email resumes to pakmanqf@yahoo.com or fax to 325-658-6947.