

SMA InfoMeat

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Email: phyllis@southwestmeat.org

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Edited by Phyllis Zimmerman

SMA, NMA Leaders Visit Washington, D.C.

In a joint annual visit to our nation's capital last week, SMA and National Meat Association leaders began their trip at a dinner with retired Congressman Charlie Stenholm on Tuesday. Now a Senior Policy Advisor at Olsson, Frank & Weeda, he spoke to the more than 20 attendees about the budget implications stalling the Farm Bill and other agricultural issues, including immigration reform and animal welfare. On Wednesday morning, the group held a fundraiser for Representative Jim Costa (D-CA), a third-generation family farmer who understands the agricultural sector better than most congressmen. Afterwards, staffers from the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, as well as a staffer from the House Energy and Commerce Committee, gave details of their struggles to work out a Farm Bill compromise. The group then attended a meeting with Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer and the discussion turned to Country-of-Origin Labeling, feed prices and the Columbia FTA. Schafer spoke with understanding on these issues and answered questions. The group then had lunch with Western Growers Association Washington representative Cathy Enright, formerly of USTR, who talked to the group about trade liberalization. Later, the associations hosted a reception for congressional representatives, their staffers and other friends of the industry in the Agriculture Committee Room of the Longworth House Office Building. On Thursday, National Cattlemen's Beef Association CEO Terry Stokes spoke on the topic of "teachable moments," i.e. getting facts out about the meat industry into the minds of the public. And, finally, the group met with USDA representatives from GIPSA, AMS and FSIS. The meetings were cordial, but pointed, and directly addressed issues ranging from animal welfare to Food Safety Assessments. The tight schedule of excellent speakers and attentive attendees resulted in much work accomplished by the end of the three days. Hopefully the SMA/NMA visit will keep meat industry issues in the forefront of the minds of the legislators and regulators with whom the group met. *(Many thanks to NMA for this detailed summary.)*

FSIS Holds Public Meeting on *E. coli* O157:H7

Last Wednesday and Thursday, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) held a public meeting on *E. coli* O157:H7 to discuss possible options on how to enhance control of this pathogen. The meeting was part of FSIS' promised response to the increases in outbreak-generated recalls and positive agency regulatory samples in 2007. However, rather than focusing solely on how to reduce the illnesses attributable to *E. coli* O157:H7 in raw, non-intact beef, the agency's agenda included presentations and discussion on two other issues: whether *E. coli* O157:H7 should be made an adulterant on raw intact products and whether to declare other shiga toxin producing *E. coli* (Non-O157 STEC) an adulterant in raw beef. In his opening comments, Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond called for a rapid approach; initiation of a bold initiative to address *E. coli* O157:H7 during the remaining days of the current Administration and not be diverted by a "prolonged, fruitless deliberation on the subject." Much of the meeting focused on the events of 2007 and how to prevent a recurrence of the increased *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks, recalls and agency regulatory positive samples. In addition, the potential future expansion of the adulteration definition to intact products and Non-O157 STEC was discussed. For a detailed summary of the meeting by SMA's legal counsel, Dennis Johnson, Esq., of Olsson Frank, and Weeda, P.C., please email phyllis@southwestmeat.org. The Agency will be accepting comments until May 7. To obtain copies of the PowerPoints presented at the meeting, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/2008_Notices_Index/index.asp#Ecoli.

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CDC Reports Little Change in Foodborne Illness Rates

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its annual report on the incidence of foodborne illness in FoodNet, a 10-state study area, showing little change in the 2007 rates compared to recent years (2004-06). FSIS participates with CDC, the FDA and state partners in the system, which conducts surveillance and studies about foodborne illness in the U.S. Much progress has been made in combating foodborne illness over the last 10 years. FSIS will use the comparison of 2007 to the recent period, along with other research, data and stakeholder input, in devising new regulatory programs and education for consumers, industry and FSIS personnel. Illnesses associated with two *Salmonella* serotypes often associated with FSIS-regulated products, Typhimurium and Heidelberg, decreased in 2007 compared to the recent period. The illness rates from *E. coli* O157:H7 were slightly down from 2006. The rate of illness caused by all *Salmonella* serotypes has not changed significantly since the baseline period (1996-98). CDC noted outbreaks related to peanut butter, puffed vegetable snacks, frozen pot pies and pet turtles contributed to the lack of progress for salmonellosis rates. The complete report is available at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5714a2.htm.

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FSIS Revises Non-Routine Incident Response Directive

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has updated Directive 5500.2: Non-Routine Incident Response. The purpose of the directive is to outline the procedures that the Emergency Management Committee (EMC) is to follow while managing a non-routine incident. A non-routine incident presents a grave or potentially grave threat to public health involving FSIS-regulated product, such as: life-threatening, human illnesses potentially implicating FSIS-regulated product; deliberate contamination of FSIS-regulated product; or animal disease with potentially significant public health implications for FSIS-regulated product. Additional situations FSIS may consider non-routine incidents include natural disasters, terrorist attacks on the nation's critical infrastructures or other incidents requiring a national coordinated response and incidents involving FSIS-regulated products and law enforcement authorities, e.g. stolen trucks. The directive was reissued to remove the statement that the NRIMS system sends out a second e-mail that provides the NRIR for review (it only sends out one), to clarify what a non-routine incident is, and to provide available information concerning the EMC. To view the revised directive, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/5500.2Rev2.pdf.

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Briefly . . .

FSIS Releases FY 2008-2013 Strategic Plan: FSIS has recently completed the strategic planning process, which began with a review of the mission-critical USDA goals and objectives. It continued with a thorough review of FSIS and the development of goals and objectives that will help the agency better meet public health challenges. The end result is The FSIS FY 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, which will guide the Agency's activities over the next five years. The plan includes FSIS' public health mission, vision, goals and the means and strategies for meeting those goals. In the "Letter from the Administrator" section of the plan, FSIS Administrator Al Almanza states that the plan is the "foundation document for both the long range and the day-to-day operations of the Agency." During the coming weeks, FSIS will provide additional information on the plan and its components. Visit www.fsis.usda.gov/About_FSIS/Strategic_Planning/ to review the agency's mission, vision and future goals.

FSIS Posts Draft HIKE on Double Stunning: FSIS recently posted a DRAFT Humane Interactive Knowledge Exchange (HIKE) scenario on its website. The HIKE scenario is available for comments until April 16, 2008. The draft HIKE scenario describes a large cull cow slaughter operation that routinely uses double stunning (i.e., using two shots or blows to stun) for stunning cattle as part of their slaughter process. The establishment states that it wants to ensure that animals will not regain consciousness after the initial

stun, and that there is a minimum of excitement and discomfort, referring to the second stun as a "security knock." Regulations (9 CFR 313.15) require livestock be rendered unconscious by a single blow, but there are no regulations that prohibit the establishment from delivering a second stunning blow to an animal that was effectively rendered unconscious due to the first stunning blow. The HIKE, 01HD-08: Double Stunning, may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/FSIS_Employees/HIKE_01D-08/index.asp.

Pelosi Pushes House to Block CFTA: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the U.S. House of Representatives voted last Thursday (224-195) to indefinitely delay action on a free trade agreement with Colombia, a move the White House said may kill the pact. The U.S.- Colombia FTA is one of the best-negotiated free trade agreements for U.S. beef to date, immediately eliminating tariffs on high-quality beef and eventually reducing tariffs on all other beef products. Prime and choice graded beef would receive immediate duty-free, quota-free access upon implementation of the agreement and tariffs on all remaining beef products would be eliminated within 15 years. Colombia is not eligible to export live cattle or fresh beef to the U.S. due to foot-and-mouth disease restrictions.

FSNS Announces New Laboratory: SMA member Food Safety Net Services (FSNS) last week announced the opening of its newly expanded laboratory at corporate headquarters in San Antonio, Texas. The state-of-the-art facility will house a broader scope of services, including advanced analytical chemistry capabilities, while increasing the capacity of their special projects and research divisions. The new San Antonio facility is open 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

USDA Announces New AMS Associate Administrator: Last week, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced the selection of David R. Shipman as the new Associate Administrator of the agency. "His vast experience and proven abilities in a variety of leadership positions throughout USDA make him an ideal choice for this important position," said AMS Administrator Lloyd Day. Shipman has worked for USDA since 1976. Prior to this appointment, since 1994, he served as the Deputy Administrator for USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA). Shipman also has served as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs and Acting Administrator for GIPSA. Shipman is a graduate of the University of Connecticut. His selection comes at the retirement of Dr. Kenneth C. Clayton, who served in the Associate Administrator position for over 19 years and served at USDA for over 30 years.