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FSIS Issues Notices on *E. coli* Sampling and Testing

On Friday, December 19, 2007, the FSIS issued Notice 86-07, "New Sampling Code for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 Testing In Raw Ground Beef". This Notice may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/86-07.pdf. Effective January 1, 2008, FSIS "will initiate an enhanced risk-based sampling and testing program" for *E. coli* in raw ground beef. This new program will be designated as "MT43" (instead of MT03) and is independent of "MT04" follow-up testing. Inspection program personnel can "expect to collect a minimum of 4 samples and up to 24 samples annually." FSIS also issued Notice 87-07, "Placing 2007 *E. coli* O157:H7 FSIS Notices with FSIS Directive 10,010.1 On The Web Page" on Friday, December 19, 2007. A copy of this Notice may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/87-07.pdf. Links to the five Notices (issued in 2007) regarding *E. coli* O157:H7 sampling and testing have been posted under FSIS Directive 10,010.1, "Microbiological Testing Program for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 in Raw Ground Beef Products and Raw Ground Beef Components and Beef Patty Components," available online at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/10000_Series-Laboratory_Services/index.asp.

APHIS Announces New Veterinary Diagnostic Services Fees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced an adjustment to the user fees charged for veterinary diagnostic services. These user fees will be increased incrementally beginning January 18, 2008, and continuing through fiscal year 2012 to reflect the rising cost of providing diagnostic services each year. APHIS charges fees for its veterinary diagnostic services, or the laboratory work involved in identifying and diagnosing disease-causing organisms or chemical agents in animals. Specifically, APHIS will adjust user fees for the following services: Laboratory tests, reagents and other veterinary diagnostic services performed at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories' (NVSL) Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory; laboratory tests performed as part of isolation and identification testing at NVSL; laboratory tests performed as part of serology testing at NVSL; laboratory tests performed at the pathobiology laboratory at NVSL; diagnostic reagents produced at NVSL or other authorized sites; and other diagnostic services or materials provided at NVSL. The new schedule of fee increases will help ensure that the fees accurately reflect the cost of providing these important services. A list of diagnostic services and the fees involved is available on the APHIS veterinary services website at: www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/lab_info_services/diagnos_tests.shtml. This final rule was published in the December 19 *Federal Register* and becomes effective January 18, 2008.

Register now for "Developing & Implementing HACCP Plans for the Meat Industry"

to be held at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, **February 13-15, 2008**, hosted by SMA and the Texas A&M Department of Animal Science. The course provides hands-on training in developing a HACCP program for all types of meat slaughtering and processing facilities.

Registration forms are available on our website or by contacting the SMA office.

Sign up today!

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USDA Releases Business Plan for Animal Disease Traceability

On December 19, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released its draft of a Business Plan for Advancing Animal Disease Traceability. The business plan supports the 48-hour traceback long-term goal of the National Animal Identification System as well as provides benchmarks to guide the program as it moves towards optimum traceability. Animal diseases like tuberculosis, brucellosis or low pathogenic avian influenza are common threats to U.S. livestock and a reality for many producers. "By creating a nationally integrated, modern animal disease response system, like the National Animal Identification System, animal health officials quickly can obtain all of the information they need to locate as well as trace the movement of diseased and exposed animals, which will significantly minimize the spread of the disease," said Bruce Knight, under secretary for USDA's marketing and regulatory programs. In order to improve traceability, USDA applied a business plan model in an effort to: identify areas of weakness and opportunity; establish benchmarks against which to measure success; and communicate a vision for the future of traceability. The draft plan provides a comprehensive look at the country's current traceability status, including a breakdown by species, detailing seven strategies that will provide the greatest amount of traceability progress in a short amount of time. These strategies involve state and federally regulated and voluntary animal health programs, industry-administered animal management and marketing programs, as well as various animal identification techniques. USDA also released the official version of the National Animal Identification System User Guide, replacing the November 2006 draft version. USDA has reviewed and incorporated public comments into the official version, making the document easier for readers to understand and use. The User Guide, upon which the Business Plan builds, provides producers with the information they need to know about how the National Animal Identification System works, how they can put the system to use and why participation would benefit them and their animals. The User Guide contains the most up-to-date information on the National Animal Identification System, as well as how to participate in all three aspects of the program, including premises registration, animal identification and animal tracing. The draft plan is available on the National Animal Identification System Web site at www.usda.gov/nais.

Briefly . . .

FSIS Offers *E. coli* Workshops for Small, Very Small Plants: FSIS will hold *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) outreach workshops on January 9, 2008, for the owners and operators of small and very small plants in New Mexico, Missouri, California, Oklahoma and Louisiana. The workshops will cover prerequisite programs and FSIS Notices 65-07, 66-07 and 68-07. The outreach workshops will be held at the following locations: Radisson Hotel Albuquerque, 2500 Carlisle Blvd., NE, Albuquerque, NM, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM; Holiday Inn Express Hotel and Suites, 4300 Bangs Ave., Modesto, CA, from 5:30 to 7:30 PM; Crowne Plaza Oklahoma City, 2945 Northwest Expressway, Oklahoma City, OK, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM; and Holiday Inn Downtown Shreveport, 102 Lake St., Shreveport, LA, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. To register by phone, call 800-336-3747. Online registration forms and information about upcoming sessions can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp.

FSIS Issues Alert for Ground Beef: Last Thursday, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued a public health alert for approximately 14,800 pounds of ground beef products that may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7, that were produced by Texas American Food Service Corporation, a Fort Worth, TX, establishment doing business as American Fresh Foods. The public health alert was initiated after a trailer containing the products was reported stolen by the company. American Fresh Foods urged Texas consumers not to purchase its ground beef under questionable circumstances. According to company officials, the stolen meat had been placed in a refrigerated truck and held on the plant's property. The product, a portion of which had been segregated as possibly affected with *E. coli* O157:H7, was being removed from fresh commercial sale. "Consumers need to know that our meat products being sold through normal retail channels – such as grocery stores – are safe. Our primary concern, however, is for the safety of those people who may be persuaded to buy beef products under questionable circumstances," said Timothy Biela, Chief Food Safety and Quality Assurance Officer for American Fresh Foods. "Our first priority is their safety. We do not know how this product has been handled since it left our control. The stolen truck had only a limited supply of refrigeration fuel." Each product label bears the establishment number "EST. 13116" inside the USDA mark of inspection. The consumer and bulk ground beef products were produced on December 19, 2007.

Japan Confirms 34th Case of BSE: The Japanese Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry said on Friday that a cow in northern Japan has tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). It was the 34th case of BSE confirmed so far in the country. According to the ministry's press release, the 15-year-old cow was the oldest BSE case discovered so far, born in western Japan's Shimane Prefecture and raised in Hokkaido. Preliminary positive test results after the cow was slaughtered Wednesday were confirmed by further testing at Hokkaido University and another agricultural college nearby. The cow was incinerated and no products entered the public market.