

SMA InfoMeat

1957

Representing the Meat Industry for Over 50 Years

2008

July 14, 2008

Volume 35, Issue 2

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www.southwestmeat.org

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New Rule Identifies Retailers during Recalls

Secretary Ed Schafer announced Friday that USDA will make public the names of retail stores that have received products subject to a Class I recall, starting next month. "The identity of retail stores with recalled meat and poultry from their suppliers has always been a missing piece of information for the public during a recall," said Schafer. "People want to know if they need to be on the lookout for recalled meat and poultry from their local store and by providing lists of retail outlets during recalls, USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service will improve public health protection by better informing consumers." FSIS will post on its website a list of retail consignees that received products subject to Class I recalls, the highest risk category, generally within three to ten business days of issuing the recall release. FSIS will not identify distribution centers, institutions or restaurants, since they prepare food for immediate consumption without packaging that may be identifiable or available to consumers. Retail stores including supermarkets or other grocery stores, convenience stores, meat markets, wholesale clubs and supercenters will be identified. The list of retail stores and locations compiled by FSIS personnel during recall effectiveness checks will be posted at www.fsis.usda.gov and shared with state and local public health officials where the retail stores are located. The announcement provided a 30-day notice after the rule is published in the *Federal Register* before the process of listing retail stores takes effect.

Schafer Expresses Confidence in U.S. Food Safety System

During a tour of several meat processing plants last week, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer expressed confidence in our nation's food safety system, but said that the meat processing industry will always face challenges due to the evolution of the bacteria carried by food animals. He did not tour the Nebraska Beef Ltd. plant in Omaha which recalled 5.3 million pounds of meat earlier this month. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) concluded last week that Nebraska Beef's production practices were insufficient to effectively control *E. coli* bacteria, but have since signed off on corrective actions that the establishment proposed. Schafer's tour was designed to showcase innovative ways companies are working to keep meat safe. He visited a Hormel pork plant in Fremont where canned Spam is made, a Cargill Meat Solutions beef plant in Schuyler, and an Omaha Steaks processing plant in Omaha. At the Cargill plant, cattle carcasses are washed down with chemical solutions before and after hide removal to help reduce *E. coli*. Carcasses are also examined under ultraviolet light to reveal any sign of chlorophyll, indicating possible contamination from feces. The beef is pulled aside so that contaminated areas can be trimmed. The hide-washing system and UV scanners Cargill uses are examples of the kind of measures the meat industry has developed to control *E. coli*. "Most of this equipment you had to invent, and test and test," said Vaughn Blum, general manager of the Cargill plant. At Omaha Steaks, all of the ground beef is irradiated after it has been packaged to kill any bacteria that is present. Hormel uses a high-pressure pasteurization process to ensure that its pork is safe. That step also takes place after packaging. Schafer said he doesn't think innovative food safety measures like the ones he saw in Nebraska should necessarily be required for all plants, because each company should choose what works best for them. He commented that the plants he visited all appeared well run and that safety was obviously a priority. "I wish everybody would have a chance to see the process," Schafer said. "Then they could see the cleanliness of the plants, and all the effort that goes into producing a safe product."

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FDA Issues Final Rule Barring SRMs in Animal Feed

A final regulation barring specified high-risk material from cattle 30 months of age and older from being included in animal feed, was issued yesterday by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. FDA said the final rule, which prohibits brain material and spinal cords from being included in feed, further protects animals and consumers against bovine spongiform encephalopathy. "This FDA action serves to further protect the U.S. cattle population from the already low risk of BSE," said Dr. Bernadette Dunham, director of FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine. "The new rule strengthens existing safeguards." These materials have the highest risk for carrying the agent thought to cause BSE. The entire carcass of cattle not inspected and passed for human consumption is also prohibited, unless the brains and spinal cords have been removed or the animals are less than 30 months old. This regulation finalizes a proposed rule that the FDA issued for public comment in October 2005. The final rule is effective 12 months from today to allow the livestock, meat, rendering and feed industries time to adapt their practices to comply with the new regulation. Under the new requirements, renderers processing cattle not inspected and passed for human consumption must provide FDA inspectors written protocols for determining the age of cattle and demonstrating the brain and spinal cords of cattle have been effectively removed. (Brian Salvage, *meatpoultry.com*, 7/9/08)

FSIS Issues Notice on Beef Exports to Korea

On July 10, 2008, the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued FSIS Notice 46-08: Export of Beef and Beef Products to Korea. This Notice is available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/46-08.pdf. The information contained in this Notice is very specific and we encourage you to read this Notice as well as the FSIS export library closely in preparing to export product to Korea. The export library is available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Republic_of_Korea_Requirements/index.asp. Some of the key highlights include:

- As a transitional measure, only U.S. beef from cattle less than 30-months of age will be shipped to Korea;
- The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has set up a voluntary QSA Program to verify that beef from participating plants will be from cattle less than 30 months of age;
- Exporting establishments may choose to participate in the AMS QSA Program;
- While participation is not required to receive an export certificate, Korea will not accept at port-of-entry shipments of beef without a statement regarding the QSA Program on the export certificate and Korean quarantine officials will return such shipments to the owner/agent of the product.

FSIS Revises Directive on EIAO Assessment Methodology

Last Wednesday, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued FSIS Directive 5100.1, Rev. 1, Enforcement, Investigations, and Analysis Officer (EIAO) Comprehensive Food Safety Assessment Methodology. This Directive was re-issued in its entirety to incorporate new sections addressing how EIAOs are to: (1) communicate findings during and after the assessment process (pg. 18, Section VI), (2) make and document recommendations as a result of the assessment (pg. 22, Section VIII), and (3) verify establishment corrective measures following a Notice of Intended Enforcement Action (NOIE) or Notice of Suspension (pg. 24, Section IX). Importantly, the new Directive did not modify previous instructions regarding when and how to conduct food safety assessments. The re-issued Directive is available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/5100.1Rev1.pdf. For a detailed summary of the revised Directive by SMA legal counsel Olsson, Frank & Weeda, P.C., email phyllis@southwestmeat.org.

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SMA Office Closed for Convention

The SMA office will be closed from
Tuesday, July 15 through Friday, July 18
while we attend our 52nd Annual Convention
and Suppliers' Showcase in Scottsdale, AZ. Of
course, we will be checking office messages
regularly, or you may reach us at the Camel-
back Inn at 480-948-1700. Ask for SMA at the
"north registration desk."

We hope to see you in Arizona!

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POSITION AVAILABLE

Hudson Sausage Company of Austin, Texas, a processor of smoked meats and wild game, is seeking a **General Manager**.

Individual must be hands-on with an understanding of:

- HACCP and USDA Inspection
- Leadership and employee morale
- Product yields, costing, and scheduling
- Continuous improvement
- Computer spreadsheet and word processing

Bachelor's degree or knowledge equivalent to such degree is required with a minimum of 5 years related meat industry experience. Salary and benefits are negotiable depending on level of experience.

Qualified applicants should send resumes to **bklein@gvvc.com** or fax to **512-445-6614**.

Briefly . . .

FSIS Offers Podcast on Food Defense Plans: FSIS released a podcast titled "Developing Food Defense Plans" last week to help plant owners and operators to learn the importance of developing a solid plan through a three step process. A food defense plan also helps to maintain a safe working environment for employees,

provide a quality product to customers and is particularly helpful during emergencies. FSIS will conduct a survey on August 1 to determine how many FSIS-regulated slaughter and processing plants have voluntarily adopted functional food defense plans. Visit FSIS' website at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Food_Safety_Inspection_Podcasts/index.asp to review this helpful resource.

Eller to Lead NCBA Washington Office: The National Cattlemen's Beef Association has hired J. Burton Eller, Jr. to manage the association's legislative and regulatory office in Washington, D.C., a return for the senior executive of the former National Cattlemen's Association. Burton will report to CEO Terry Stokes, who served an additional role as interim head of the D.C. office during the search for a new senior vice president of government affairs. "I have seen firsthand the challenges facing cattlemen in Washington, D.C.," Stokes said. "My goal was to find someone who could step into this role without missing a beat and am confident Burton is the right man to lead NCBA government affairs as we go forward." Eller most recently served as Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at USDA and previously spent three years directing the Office of External Affairs for USDA's Farm Service Agency.

California Culls Cattle Due to TB: More than 4,800 dairy cows at risk of carrying tuberculosis were scheduled for slaughtered last week in Central California, where nearly 16,000 cattle in the country's largest milk-producing region were quarantined, federal officials said. U.S. Undersecretary of Agriculture Bruce Knight met privately with local dairy operators last Tuesday along with the state veterinarian and other industry officials monitoring three new cases of TB recently discovered in Fresno County dairies. U.S. and state agriculture officials were still tight lipped about the identities and locations of the three dairies where cows tested positive for the disease. The discovery of TB has already prompted changes in interstate shipping regulations, and trade organizations are worried about the possible financial effect on California's \$7.3-billion dairy industry.

FDA Issues Order Prohibiting Antimicrobial Drug in Poultry: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has published a final rule that prohibits the extralabel use of cephalosporin antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals, including chickens, turkeys, cattle and swine. According to the FDA, this rule will help protect consumers against antimicrobial-resistant strains of zoonotic foodborne bacterial pathogens. FDA has gathered evidence showing that the extralabel use of cephalosporins in food-producing animals is likely to contribute to the emergence of resistance and compromise human therapies. The prohibition of extralabel use of cephalosporin antimicrobial drugs in food-producing animals will protect the public health by preserving the effectiveness of cephalosporin-class drugs for the treatment of human infections. The rule will go into effect on October 1, 2008.