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Hot Topics, Temps Top 52nd Annual Convention

Hot industry topics and the searing southwest climate were the top subjects for attendees at the 52nd Annual Convention and Suppliers' Showcase at the Camelback Inn in Scottsdale, Arizona last week. Members thoroughly enjoyed the unique, historic resort as the hotel staff provided excellent service, and the desert landscape and majestic Saguaro cacti offered an exciting change of scenery for our annual meeting! At the General Sessions, members heard from USDA's FSIS Administrator, Al Almanza, and many other knowledgeable speakers on priorities at FSIS, USDA regulatory policies, humane handling of livestock, public health risk-based inspection, and plant sanitation issues. Other topics included hiring practices and employment issues, *E. coli* research and controls, and standardizing supplier requirements. At the Bob Ondrusek Memorial Golf Tournament, sponsored by Birko Corporation, 17 teams braved the heat to compete in the four-man scramble. The winners were Brian Covington, Jason Beyer, Ron Martin and Chris Hansen. Barry Glauben won the men's longest drive, Darlis Nace won the women's longest drive, and West Ballard won closest to the pin. On Friday, our Suppliers' Showcase featured 50 exhibitors demonstrating the latest in industry equipment, supplies and services. At the "Boots and Bling" Casino Night, Jim Ondrusek presented six students with Bob Ondrusek Memorial Scholarships: Leslie Garcia of Tarleton State University, Sarah West and Amanda Smith of Texas A&M University, and Shanna Ward of Texas Tech University were present to receive their awards; Carri Smith of Oklahoma State University and Michael DeLashmutt of Tarleton were unable to attend. The event culminated with



FSIS Administrator Al Almanza speaks at SMA's 52nd Annual Convention.



Jim Ondrusek of Columbia Packing Co. and Bob Ondrusek Memorial Scholarship winners: (l to r) Sarah West, Amanda Smith, Shanna Ward, and Leslie Garcia.

the President's Dinner and Dance, where gifts were presented to outgoing officers, Board members were recognized, and couples danced to the live music of AirZona. SMA thanks all of the attendees, sponsors, and speakers who made this year's convention such a great success! Very special thanks go to Aggies Sarah West, Tiffany Muras and Amanda Smith, and Red Raider Shanna Ward, who expertly managed our registration desk and supervised our Kids Party! We also gratefully acknowledge Dr. Davey Griffin and Dr. Kerri Harris of TAMU for serving as official photographers and compiling our slideshow. If you were unable to attend, please make plans to join us next year at our 53rd Annual Convention at the always popular Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort in San Antonio!

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FSIS Issues Notice on Defense Survey

Last Thursday, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued Notice 47-08, "Food Defense Survey 2008." This is to inform inspection program personnel that a third Food Defense survey will be scheduled through the Performance-Based Inspection System (PBIS) beginning August 1, 2008. The survey will run for thirty (30) days. The Notice may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/47-08.pdf. The survey will provide FSIS with information on how many establishments have voluntarily adopted food defense plans. Past surveys in August 2006 and November 2007 indicated a 27% and 31% adoption rate, respectively, by establishments. While there is currently no regulatory requirement that an establishment adopt a food defense plan, FSIS plans on moving forward with rulemaking to mandate functional food defense plans if at least 90% of establishments do not voluntarily adopt a plan in the near future. FSIS believes that establishments having a functional food defense plan minimize the risk of intentional contamination to their products and have a business advantage because the plan "contributes to the protection of consumer health, provide additional process control in the establishment, and expedites the establishment's response to situation in which the safety of the meat or poultry or processed egg supply is directly threatened." Two changes were made from the initial survey to ensure that this survey accurately measures whether or not an establishment has a food defense plan. The first change is that examples of other types of plans, which may have incorporated the establishment's food defense measures, have been included as these should be considered by FSIS employees when completing the survey. In addition, FSIS has re-worded the question regarding plan availability to FSIS employees and clearly indicates that the food defense plan only needs to be available for review by FSIS on-site. Copies do not need to be provided and the plan should not be removed from the official premises. FSIS has provided various guidance materials for industry on developing a food defense plan as well as a checklist to perform a self-assessment to identify potential concerns. These various documents may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Defense_&_Emergency_Response/Guidance_Materials/index.asp. Another Notice with additional information will be issued by FSIS before the actual survey begins on August 1st.



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SMA Elects New Officers, Directors

During annual business meetings last Friday, SMA elected new officers for fiscal year 2008-09. Glen Kusak of Yoakum Packing Co. stepped down as Immediate Past Chairman, and Bobby Yarborough of Manda Fine Meats acceded to that seat. Jim Ondrusek of Columbia Packing Co. moved up to the position of Chairman of the Board and Jarrod Stokes of San Angelo Packing Co. will serve as Vice Chairman. David Ruff of Morrilton Packing Co. was installed as the new Secretary-Treasurer. Three regular members were appointed to the Board of Directors for three year terms: Travis Holmes of SurLean Foods, Danny Janecka, II of J Bar B Foods, and Cody Lane of Pederson Natural Farms. SMA sincerely thanks Phil Chapman of Owens Foods and Mike Dankworth of Dankworth Packing Co., whose terms expired this year, for their many years of valued service on the Board of Directors. Cecelia Railey of Jim Henry Enterprises stepped down as Chairman of the Associate Member Board, and is succeeded by Gary Nace of Birko Corp. Rick Kimbrell of DCS Sanitation Management was installed as the new President, George Heid moved up to serve as Vice president, and Associate members elected Shawn Harris of Cryovac as their new Secretary/Treasurer. SMA gratefully thanks Glen Kusak and Cecelia Railey for the years of dedicated service and outstanding leadership they have provided to our organization!

Briefly . . .

Bill Would Reauthorize E-Verify System: Rep. Chris Cannon (R-UT) has introduced a bill in Congress that would reauthorize the Department of Homeland Security's E-Verify employment verification program. The E-Verify Extension and Expansion Act of 2008, HR 6454 would reauthorize and expand the current E-Verify program, which is set to expire November 30, 2008. E-Verify is intended to exclude unauthorized workers through verification of employment documents with the use of government databases. Cannon's legislation maintains the voluntary status of the E-Verify program, addresses the issue of identity theft through a voluntary biometric component and includes federal preemption language to address the growing patchwork of state-based immigration laws. Congress may hold a House floor vote to extend the E-Verify program before the August recess.

NACMPI to Hold Public Meetings: The National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection will hold a public meeting on August 27 and 28 to review and discuss international equivalence relating to audits associated with determinations of a country's status, equivalence criteria, and the reinspection system for imported product. The Committee will hold a public meeting on Wednesday, August 27, from 8:30 AM to 5 PM. and Thursday, August 28, from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM. The meetings will be held in the conference room at the south end of the USDA South Building cafeteria, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250. SMA President/CEO Joe Harris and Board of Directors member Brian Covington both serve on the advisory committee.

FSIS Posts Completed Salmonella Verification Sample Set Results: In March, the Agency began posting the names of broiler establishments showing inconsistent or poor process control on the FSIS website. However, July's report reveals that there are no establishments listed in Category 3. In both March and April, 19 establishments were identified in Category 2 and two establishments were in Category 3. In both May and June, 15 establishments were listed in Category 2, and two establishments were listed in Category 3. For the July posting, 16 establishments are in Category 2, and there are none to report for Category 3. In addition, the Agency reports that 81% of broiler establishments are in Category 1 as of July 15, 2008 compared to the 35% that were in Category 1 in July 2006, an extraordinary improvement. The Agency believes that the broiler industry continues to move in the right direction and is progressing toward the 90% goal marked to meeting the Healthy People Goal of 2010. The current listing can be accessed at www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Salmonella_Verification_Testing_Program/index.asp.