

# SMA InfoMeat

1957

Representing the Meat Industry for Over 50 Years

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Edited by Phyllis Zimmerman

## FSIS Enhances Small Plant Outreach, Education

Last Friday, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announced a new program office dedicated to supporting the agency's continued efforts in outreach to small and very small plants and education of FSIS personnel. The Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training (OOEET) will provide consolidated access, resources and technical support for small and very small plants to better assist them in providing safe and wholesome meat, poultry and processed egg products. This program area also will ensure that all FSIS personnel have the necessary training to effectively carry out their assigned duties. OOEET will collaborate with state inspection programs to share training materials, provide technical advice and conduct outreach activities. "Ensuring the safety of the nation's food supply makes good public health sense as well as good business sense," said Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond. "Owners and operators of every plant size need resources and tools for food safety success, so continued education through a rigorous outreach program is a critical long-term agency priority." This reorganization will consolidate the Agency's existing outreach, training and state program liaison functions and staff into a unified outreach program area and will enhance the consistency, efficiency and utilization of resources. In addition, OOEET will provide: more rapid and consistent delivery of key services to serve better the needs of small and very small plants; one-stop access to information and technical assistance; continuing publication and assessment of guidance and information to ensure consistent application of public health regulatory policies; enhanced relationships with our public health partners; continuing evaluation of the effectiveness of FSIS programs focused on small and very small plants; and Improved collaboration with other USDA agencies on the needs of small and very small plants. The establishment of OOEET enhances the agency's ongoing effort to assist small and very small plants with implementing food safety and public health regulations. OOEET will serve as a key partner with industry in this important and worthwhile effort. For more information about FSIS outreach to small and very small plants, visit the FSIS small plant web page at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Small\\_Very\\_Small\\_Plants/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Small_Very_Small_Plants/index.asp).

## JBS Acquires National Beef, Smithfield Beef, Tasman Group

Last week JBS announced the acquisition of National Beef Packing Company, LLC, Smithfield Beef Group, Inc. and Tasman Group Ltd. as part of its strategy to increase its global presence in the beef industry. Upon the closing of these acquisitions, JBS, which has over 55 years of tradition in the food sector, will have 63,000 employees worldwide, a slaughter capacity of 79,200 head of cattle per day, 48,000 head of hogs per day and annual sales of approximately \$21.5 billion. On February 29, 2008, JBS signed an agreement to purchase National Beef. Also, on March 4, 2008, an agreement was signed to acquire Smithfield Beef, as well as Tasman. The first two companies are located in the United States and the third is located in Australia. "As part of JBS's globalization strategy, the acquisitions of National Beef, Smithfield and Tasman represent the conclusion of an investment plan to build a sustainable platform for the slaughter, production and commercialization of red meat in the United States and Australia," said Joesley M. Batista, president and CEO of JBS S.A. "This process began in July 2007 with the purchase of Swift & Company and culminates with these acquisitions." JBS initiated its international presence in September of 2005 with the acquisition of Swift Armour S.A. Argentina. Last year JBS bought Swift & Company, expanding its presence into the U.S. beef and pork industries and the Australian beef business.

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## CDC Investigates Worker Illnesses at Swine Slaughterhouses

The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is investigating an outbreak of neurologic illnesses among workers in swine slaughterhouses in Minnesota, Indiana, and Nebraska. The Minnesota Department of Health first learned of the illnesses in October, 2007, and initiated an investigation. As of January 28, Minnesota investigators identified eight workers with progressive inflammatory neuropathy (PIN) and four workers with probable or possible PIN. The onset of illness was from November 2006 through November 2007. Symptoms ranged from acute paralysis to gradually progressive symmetric weakness. All 12 patients reported having regular contact with an area where a compressed air device was used to harvest brain tissue from pig heads. One former worker in Nebraska has been identified with the illness, and several workers at an Indiana plant have been preliminarily identified with neurologic illnesses and similar histories of exposure to head-processing activities. In response to the investigation, the plants voluntarily suspended harvesting of brains and instituted additional mandatory personal protective equipment for workers in the head-processing area. One hypothesis for development of PIN is that worker exposure to aerosolized pig neural protein might have induced an autoimmune-mediated peripheral neuropathy, but the investigation is ongoing.

## AMS Announces Fee Increase for Grading, Auditing Services

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is increasing fees for certain grading and audit services for eggs, poultry and rabbits for FY 2008 and FY 2009. Effective March 30, 2008, the fee and charge increases are necessary to cover rising agency costs and salaries of federal and state employees who administer the programs. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is required to collect fees from users of these services to cover the costs of services rendered. The increase will affect most processors who request egg, poultry and rabbit grading, certification or auditing services. The basic hourly rate for resident service, or work of a grader with a regular tour of duty at a plant, will rise from the current \$39.04 to \$40.88 in FY 2008 and \$42.68 in March 2009. Additionally, for plants using resident service, the administrative fee for USDA supervision and for other overhead expenses will increase from 0.053 cents to 0.055 cents per case of shell eggs in FY 2008 and 0.055 to 0.058 cents per case in March 2009. For poultry, the increases will be from .00043 cents to .00045 cents per pound of poultry handled in FY 2008. In March 2009, the increase will be from .00045 to .00047 per pound. For poultry and eggs, the maximum monthly administrative charge that

covers overhead costs will increase from \$3,075 to \$3,150 in FY 2008 and \$3,225 in March 2009. The minimum administrative fee for grading poultry, eggs and rabbits will remain the same at \$275 per monthly billing period. Also, the basic hourly rate for nonresident fee service, or work on an intermittent, as-needed basis, will rise from the current \$69.68 to \$74.08 in FY 2008 and \$77.28 in March 2009 for regular hours and from \$80.12 to \$86.68 in FY 2008 and \$93.24 in March 2009 for weekend and holiday work. The basic audit rate will rise from the current \$82.16 to \$87.56 in FY 2008 and \$89.20 in March 2009 for regular hours. The audit rate for weekend and holiday work will increase from the current \$102.84 to \$112.00 in FY 2008 and then \$116.08 in March 2009. The grading, certification, and audit services are made available upon request and are paid for by the users. Current fees have been in effect since April 1, 2007. The fee increases were published in the March 4, 2008 *Federal Register*, and may be viewed electronically at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

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## Briefly . . .

FSIS Issues Notice on Humane Handling: On February 29, FSIS published Notice 14-08, Humane Handling Activities and Documentation in Livestock Slaughter Establishments. This notice provides added instruction for Public Health Veterinarians and other inspection program personnel to conduct humane handling activities randomly throughout their tour of duty. This document also encourages establishments to develop and implement a systematic approach for the humane handling of animals. The notice is available at [www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations\\_&\\_policies/FSIS\\_Notices\\_Index/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/FSIS_Notices_Index/index.asp).

FSIS Announces Public Meeting on *E. coli*: On April 9, FSIS will sponsor a public meeting focused on *E. coli* O157:H7. The purpose of the meeting is to have a discussion with stakeholders on recent spikes in recalls/illnesses related to *E. coli* O157:H7, provide updates on FSIS initiatives, and build a foundation for establishing solutions to address the challenges this pathogen causes. More information on the meeting, including the agenda, will be made available in future issues of the FSIS Constituent Update, available at [www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&\\_Events/2008\\_Constituent\\_Update/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/2008_Constituent_Update/index.asp).

Texas Prohibits Export of Canadian Cattle to Mexico: Mexico has offered a new trade protocol to the U.S. Department of Agriculture concerning the import of U.S. cattle. The news comes after Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples announced last week that specific Canadian cattle would not cross into Mexico through Texas export facilities due to unfair trade practices. He also encouraged other border states to follow Texas' lead. "Please remember your most important customers, the U.S. livestock producers. Until Mexico recognizes OIE trading standards and begins to accept U.S. breeding cattle consistent with those standards, we will continue this firm prohibition of specific Canadian cattle," Staples said. Canada and Mexico signed an agreement allowing the trade of certain dairy and beef cattle less than 30 months of age, including breeding stock, but Mexico only allows the importation of U.S. dairy heifers under the age of 24 months.

SMA Directories Mailed: The 2008 SMA Membership Directory has been mailed to key contacts at all member companies. If you did not receive yours, or if you would like additional copies for other personnel, please email [phyllis@southwestmeat.org](mailto:phyllis@southwestmeat.org). Additional copies are available while supplies last!

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### **Does Your HACCP Plan Need An Update? Are You Ready for an EIAO 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 25-26, 2008** at Texas A&M University.

This workshop will provide a review and evaluation of your company's HACCP plan, with hands-on help to improve it. Registration information and the course outline are available on our website.

**Sign up today!**

### **Clip and Add to your Directory:**



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