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Implementing RBI: FSIS Releases Documents on Risk Formula

Last week the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) released three documents dealing with the algorithm (or formula) the agency will use to calculate an establishment's risk score. Based on this score, FSIS will assign establishments into one of three inspection levels during the initial RBI-Processing prototype implementation (Phase 1). These algorithm documents can be found on the FSIS website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/RBI_in_Processing/index.asp. FSIS announced its intention to begin Phase 1 of its RBI-Processing Initiative sometime in April. The agency selected 30 locations (circuits) with approximately 260 processing only establishments (no combination plants will be part of Phase 1). Although Phase 1 was originally scheduled to begin next month, the start will likely be postponed for at least a month or two to permit a fuller discussion of certain issues, the most significant of which is the algorithm the agency will use to calculate establishment risk scores. During the briefing which announced the prototypes, FSIS officials summarized the initial algorithm FSIS will use to rank the plants into three inspection levels (20% in Level 1, the lowest inspection intensity; 60% in Level 2, the current intensity; and Level 3, the highest intensity). This ranking would be done on the basis of the establishment's average score for product inherent risk and plant controls, both of which are currently being weighted equally. The newly posted documents build on the information shared at the briefing. The most significant expansion is a more precise explanation as to how FSIS will modify the inspector tasks at those establishments in Levels 1 and 3. There will be no change at those establishments placed into Level 2. The agency also provided more clarification as to how it will calculate product inherent risk at establishments producing products in more than one risk category. Other than those two points, the three documents merely provide the complete formula or algorithm in greater detail and with numerous illustrations. The first document explains FSIS' formula for calculating the inherent risk and the second, how plant controls are assessed. The third and final document discusses how those two calculated scores are combined, how the three levels of inspection were determined and what the establishments assigned to the three levels can expect in terms of inspection activity. For a detailed summary of the FSIS documents by SMA legal counsel Olsson, Frank and Weeda, P.C., please email phyllis@southwestmeat.org.

Does Your HACCP Plan Need An Update? Are You Ready for an FSIS Review? Time Is Running Out to Register for our Beyond Basics HACCP Improvement Workshop!

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 29-30, 2007** at Texas A&M University.

Do you have decision-making documentation for your HACCP plan? Can you justify and defend your CCPs? Do you have all of your scientific supporting documentation on file? Can you support the frequency of your monitoring and verification activities? Is your inspector asking for information that you don't have? We can help you with these issues and answer your questions! This two day workshop provides a review and evaluation of your company's HACCP plan, with hands-on help to improve it. The registration form and course outline are available on our website.

Sign up today!

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FDA Releases Joint Report on Spinach *E. coli* Outbreak

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and California's Department of Health Services (CDHS) released a joint report Friday on an extensive investigation into the causes of the *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak last fall that was associated with contaminated Dole brand Baby Spinach and resulted in 205 confirmed illnesses and three deaths. The inquiry was assisted by experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Investigators successfully identified the environmental risk factors and the areas that were most likely involved in the outbreak, but they were unable to definitely determine how the contamination originated. The report describes the painstaking detective work of the investigators, initially focusing on the processing and packaging plant of Natural Selection Foods, LLC in San Juan Bautista, CA, where the contaminated products had been processed, and next on the source of the spinach, which fingerprinting revealed to be a 50-acre field leased to Mission Organics on a cattle ranch east of Salinas. Potential environmental risk factors for *E. coli* contamination at or near the field included the presence of wild pigs, the proximity of irrigation wells, and surface waterways exposed to feces from cattle and wildlife. Because the contamination occurred before the start of the investigation, and because of the many ways that *E. coli* O157:H7 can be transferred, the precise means by which the bacteria spread to the spinach remain unknown. The report is posted online at www.DHS.ca.gov.

Japan Requests Tyson Plant Be Removed from Certified List

Japan has asked that Tyson's Lexington, Nebraska plant be removed from the certified beef supplier list. The Japanese government contends that the Nebraska meatpacking facility violated export terms between the two countries. In February, Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. reportedly sent a shipment of beef without a U.S. government certificate identifying it as product from cattle up to 21 months of age. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns expressed frustration Thursday about Japan's request. "One of the things that I would say to the Japanese government is, 'let's bring some common sense to what we're doing here,'" he told a group of journalists. "If we had a tire that somehow was shipped from Japan to the United States that was defective and we just said we want Japan to prevent any more shipments of tires from that factory, I think Japan would justifiably say, 'That's not a fair response,'" Johanns said. "So that's how I look at this situation." Japan resumed beef trade with the United States last July. This is the first time since then that Japan has asked the United States to remove a meatpacking plant from the list of certified beef exporters.

Briefly . . .

FSIS Announces Time Change for RBI Public Meeting: FSIS has changed the time of the April 2 public meeting on risk-based inspection. The meeting will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the George Mason University, Arlington Campus, 3401 Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA. This summit is the first of a series of short public meetings or “technical summits” on specific issues raised by stakeholders during the development of risk-based inspection in processing. An agenda for the meeting is being finalized and will be posted on FSIS’ website when complete at www.fsis.usda.gov, along with audio conference information.

Cattlemen’s Beef Board Hires New CEO: Effective May 1, Tom Ramey will take over as Chief Executive Officer of the Cattlemen’s Beef Board (CBB), the Board’s Executive Committee announced last week. Current CEO Monte Reese, who will retire April 30 after 17 years of service to the CBB, said, “I am 100 percent supportive of the Executive Committee’s decision to move Tom into this position. He has the knowledge, skills, management ability and, most important, the personal integrity to lead this program in the direction that best benefits the cattle producers and importers who fund this self-help program.” Ramey has served as Chief Financial Officer for the Beef Board for about 13 years, responsible for all accounting and financial functions of the Board.

Russia Considers Resuming U.S. Beef Imports: According to a statement by their food safety organization, Rosselkhoznadzor, Russia could resume beef imports from the United States after Russian and U.S. veterinary specialists inspect and accredit U.S. facilities that produce, process and store meat products. Rosselkhoznadzor chief Sergei Dankvert and Allan Mustard, an advisor with the U.S. Embassy in Russia, reached an agreement on this issue on Friday. A timeframe for the inspections has yet to be determined. (*MeatPoultry.com, 3/23/07*)

Meat Demand Could Decline: A recent rise in cattle prices has Wall Street analysts worrying that meat producers may be in for a lean summer. High feed costs and bad weather have pushed cattle prices up nearly 14% since last March, according to USDA. Economists blame the high prices partly on skyrocketing demand for corn, a common ingredient for feed. As feed prices rise, farmers are less inclined to place their cattle in feed yards. That, in turn, sends production levels down and prices up, said the owner of a firm that conducts research on livestock and grain feed markets. He said there is “some concern that meat prices will be pushed too high, that they will curtail beef demand in the summer months.”

Miss Texas USA Finishes in Top Ten: Congratulations to Miss Texas USA, Magen Leigh Ellis, who was one of the Top Ten finalists at the 2007 Miss USA Pageant on Friday. Magen is the daughter of Tom and Celyna Ellis of John Soules Foods in Tyler, Texas. Residing in Houston, Magen attends college and works in modeling. She hopes to pursue a career in media broadcasting.



POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Creekstone Farms Premium Beef, located in Arkansas City, Kansas is accepting applications for the following:

Controller - Responsible for directing the company’s accounting functions, including establishing/maintaining the firm’s accounting principles, practices, procedures, and initiatives. Prepares financial

reports and presents findings and recommendations to top management. Requires a bachelor’s degree and at least 5 years of experience. CPA preferred.

Staff Accountant - Compiles and analyzes financial information; develops integrated revenue/expense analyses, projections, reports, and presentations; creates and analyzes periodic reports and ensures accurate recording of financial data; identifies trends/developments in competitive environments and presents findings to senior management; performs financial forecasting and reconciliation of internal accounts. Requires a BS in accounting or finance and 1-3 years of related experience.

Safety Manager - Plans, implements, and coordinates programs to reduce or eliminate occupational injuries and illnesses; manages workers compensation activities, including maintaining OSHA log, submitting required reports, managing cases and approving bills; ensures implementation of safety policies/procedures; compiles/analyzes/interprets statistical data related to exposure factors. BS in Occupational Safety, Industrial Technology, or related degree, 1-3 years safety coordination experience in a manufacturing environment, experience managing claims and an aggressive case management philosophy.

Submit resumes to: Creekstone Farms, Director of Human Resources, 604 Goff Industrial Park Rd., Arkansas City, KS 67005 or online at careers@cfpbeef.com. Company physical and drug test required. EOE



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8:00 - 10:30 AM
Crowne Plaza Houston - Downtown,
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Event registration is \$35, plus \$4 valet parking. For more information and to register online, visit:
<http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=4cb2ee02-bad3-4430-bc08-e2b0f51fc490>