

SMA InfoMeat

1957

Representing the Meat Industry for Over 50 Years

2008

January 21, 2008
Volume 33, Issue 4

Email: phyllis@southwestmeat.org
www.southwestmeat.org

Edited by Phyllis Zimmerman

FSIS Issues Final IKE Scenario on Frozen Condensate

FSIS has issued its final version of the Interactive Knowledge Exchange (IKE) Scenario 1-08: "FSIS Verification of 9 CFR 416.2(d) Regarding Frozen Condensate in Product Freezers (Part II)." The draft version of this IKE was initially posted on November 19, 2007 for comments. This IKE Scenario continues the discussion of proper ventilation in an establishment and condensation control that was also addressed in IKE Scenario 02-07, "FSIS Verification of 9 CFR 416.2(d) Regarding Frozen Condensate in Product Freezers (Jul 20, 2007)." There are no substantive changes in this final version, but the same facts are better organized than in the draft. The IKE continues the discussion of condensation control with ice observed just inside a freezer door on product boxes as well as on the freezer unit. The ice on the product boxes appears to be the result of a plugged drain on the drip pan of the freezer unit which is allowing water to drip onto the product boxes. The buildup of ice on the unit appears to be the result of not only the door opening and closing but also a broken seal on the door which is allowing the constant flow of warm air into the freezer. The Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI) determines, after a discussion with facility management, that the issue and non-compliance is "directly associated with the establishment's lack of maintenance of the facility and should be documented accordingly." The CSI then describes the insanitary conditions on a Non-compliance Record (NR) as 06D01/Facility/Structural citing 9 CFR 416.2(b) as the appropriate regulation. IKE 1-08 may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/IKE_01-08.pdf.

APHIS Finalizes Updates to BSE Minimal-Risk Regulations

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has amended its regulations regarding the importation of animals and animal products. APHIS removed several restrictions regarding animal identification and ruminant materials processing from regions that present a minimal risk of introducing bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) into the United States. This amended rule makes final several nonsubstantial changes from a proposed rule published in the August 9, 2006, *Federal Register*. Under this amended rule, APHIS is allowing: the unique individual identification of animals by means other than ear tags, provided the APHIS Administrator has approved the manner of identification for the type of animal intended for importation and the identification is traceable to the premises of origin of the animal; the importation of hide-derived, in addition to bone-derived, gelatin for any use, provided certain conditions are met; and nonruminant material that is processed in BSE minimal-risk regions to be processed in facilities that also process material derived from ruminants from the minimal-risk region. APHIS updated this rule to remove these restrictions because they provide no additional safeguards against the introduction of BSE into the United States. These changes update a March 7, 2005, rule that established regions with effective BSE prevention and detection measures, termed minimal-risk regions and conditions for safely importing live ruminants and ruminant products from such regions. Canada is currently the only country that USDA has concluded meets the requirements for a minimal-risk region. On November 19, 2007, APHIS established conditions for the importation of certain bovines and bovine commodities from BSE minimal-risk regions that had not been made eligible for importation by the first rule. Human health in the United States is protected by a system of interlocking safeguards that ensure the safety of U.S. beef. The most important of these safeguards is the ban on specified risk materials from the food supply. Canada has similar safeguards in place.

S O U T H W E S T M E A T A S S O C I A T I O N
4103 SOUTH TEXAS AVENUE, SUITE 101 • BRYAN, TX 77802 • (979) 846-9011 • FAX (979) 846-8198

FDA Declares Food from Animal Clones, Offspring Safe

After years of detailed study and analysis, the Food and Drug Administration has concluded that meat and milk from clones of cattle, swine, and goats, and the offspring of clones from any species traditionally consumed as food, are as safe to eat as food from conventionally bred animals. There was insufficient information for the agency to reach a conclusion on the safety of food from clones of other animal species, such as sheep. Last Tuesday, FDA issued three documents on animal cloning outlining the agency's regulatory approach – a risk assessment; a risk management plan; and guidance for industry. The documents were originally released in draft form in December 2006. Since that time, the risk assessment has been updated to include new scientific information, which reinforces the food safety conclusions of the drafts. In 2001, U.S. producers agreed to refrain from introducing meat or milk from clones or their progeny into the food supply until FDA could further evaluate the issue. The USDA will convene stakeholders to discuss efforts to provide a smooth and orderly market transition, as industry determines next steps with respect to the existing voluntary moratorium. At this time, the agency is not requiring labeling or any other additional measures for food from cattle, swine, and goat clones, or their offspring because food derived from these sources is no different from food derived from conventionally bred animals. No doubt, opponents of animal cloning and consumer groups will be calling for immediate labeling legislation. At this time, the agency continues to recommend that food from clones of species other than cattle, swine and goat (e.g., sheep) not be introduced into the food supply. For more information, visit www.fda.gov/cvm/cloning.htm.

Register now for “Developing & Implementing HACCP Plans for the Meat Industry”

to be held at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, **February 12-14, 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 at southwestmeat.org or by contacting the SMA office.
Sign up today!**

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FSIS Posts Second Issue of Small Plant Newsletter



USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has posted the second issue of its "Small Plant News" online. This newsletter is written for small and very small federal and state-inspected establishment owners and operators who produce meat, poultry and egg products. It offers help, in plain language, translating FSIS rules and regulations into daily operational practices. The latest issue features an article on the interactive *askFSIS* web feature, designed to help answer technical- and policy-related questions on inspection and public health regulations; information on available food safety resources and instructional material; FSIS news briefs; and a commonly asked question & answer. To view the newsletter, visit the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Small_Plant_News/index.asp. You can also sign up to receive the newsletter link in your inbox whenever a new issue is posted. FSIS personnel are interested in your comments and would like to hear from you on how the agency can provide the information and resources you need. Send your comments to SmallPlantNews@fsis.usda.gov or call 202-690-6520.

Briefly . . .

NACMPI to Meet Next Month: The National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection (NACMPI) will hold public meetings on February 5 and 6 to address the planned public health-based slaughter inspection system for young chickens, and how a similar approach could be used for inspection in processing and other slaughter establishments. NACMPI was established in 1971 to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture regarding meat and poultry inspection programs. The committee, which generally meets twice a year, addresses food safety and policy issues affecting USDA. SMA President/CEO Dr. Joe Harris and board member Brian Covington, of Keystone Foods, both serve on the committee. A copy of the agenda and supplementary information will be available prior to the meeting on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov.

Reminder: FSIS Offering Outreach Seminar: FSIS will hold an outreach seminar on January 23, from 10 to 11 AM EST and from 6 to 7 PM EST. Speaker Dr. Wesley Osburn of Texas A&M University will provide descriptions of new technologies that small and very small plants can use to control pathogens such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella* in meat and poultry slaughter operations. To register by phone, call 800-336-3747 or e-mail questions to netmeetingseminars@fsis.usda.gov. To register online, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Reg_012308_Web_Seminar/index.asp. The seminar will be held via net meeting and a seminar representative will contact you the week of the seminar with instructions on joining the event.

R-CALF Files Final Brief for Temporary Injunction Against OTM Rule: R-CALF USA has filed its final reply brief in its request that the District Court, District of South Dakota, Northern Division issue a preliminary injunction to suspend the USDA's OTM (over-30-month) Rule. On November 19, the OTM Rule opened the Canadian border to imports of live cattle born after March 1, 1999, and beef products from Canadian cattle of any age. "R-CALF asserts there is a risk of great harm if the OTM Rule is allowed to stand," said R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard. USDA argues that the agency can take whatever action it pleases in this matter because the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in the agency's favor regarding the Final Rule on "Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy; Minimal-Risk Regions and Importation of Commodities." Attorneys for both R-CALF USA and USDA have suggested the District Court hold a hearing on the preliminary injunction as soon as February 19 or 20, 2008.

USDA Announces Public Meeting to Address Codex Intergovernmental Task Force: USDA's Office of the Under Secretary for Food Safety and the Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration will host a public meeting to provide information and receive comments on agenda items and draft U.S. positions for the First Session of the Ad Hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Processing and Handling of Quick Frozen Foods of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The public meeting will be held February 5, 1-3 PM, in Room 1B-042 of the Harvey Wiley Federal Building, 5100 Paint Branch Parkway, College Park, MD. Individuals may participate via teleconference by calling 866-859-5767; passcode 3258684. Pre-registration for the public meeting is not required; however, it is encouraged to expedite entry into the building and its parking area. Agenda items and related documents will be available at www.codexalimentarius.net/current.asp for review. For further information, contact Donald Zink at 301-436-1692 or e-mail donald.zink@fda.hhs.gov to register electronically.