

SMA InfoMeat

1957

Representing the Meat Industry for Over 50 Years

2008

June 16, 2008

Volume 34, Issue 11

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www.southwestmeat.org

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FSIS Launches Baseline Data Collection Program for Turkey

On June 9, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued Notice 40-08, entitled, "Nationwide Young Turkey Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program – Update." This notice announces the launch of FSIS' Nationwide Young Turkey Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program. In addition, this notice also details the end of a 90-day training ("shake down") period as referenced in FSIS Notice 55-07, Nationwide Young Turkey Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program. Additionally, this notice:

- cancels FSIS Notice 55-07, dated 8/31/07. The sampling instructions from that notice are included in this notice and have been slightly modified;
- provides new sampling code numbers to be used for the baseline study;
- provides revised questions that will appear in Block 28 of FSIS Form 10,210-3, "Requested Sample Programs" (the sampling request form); and
- answers some of the questions which FSIS received during the "shake down" period.

During the baseline study, which will continue for a minimum of twelve months, testing will include collection of carcass sponge samples at Re-Hang and Post-Chill from young turkeys slaughtered in Federal establishments. Inspection program personnel should note that this new notice only applies to establishments that are included as part of the FSIS Nationwide Young Turkey Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program. The notice is available online at www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/40-08.pdf.

Settlement Reached in Sizzler *E. coli* Death Case

Eight years after a toddler died battling *E. coli*-related hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), her family has reached a \$13.5 million settlement with a restaurant chain's meat supplier and others, according to court records. The settlement is among the largest in the nation involving a food-borne illness, according to William Cannon, a lawyer for the family. Brianna Kriefall and her family had eaten at a Sizzler in South Milwaukee in July 2000. Although Brianna didn't eat meat during the meal, lawyers argued that the watermelon she ate was cross-contaminated by tainted meat. She died a week later from HUS, which causes kidney failure and low blood-cell counts. An additional 140 people fell sick in the outbreak at two Sizzler restaurants. Records for the Kriefall case were filed Friday, but the case remains far from over. The national Sizzler restaurant chain, its local franchise, and an insurance company are suing Excel Corp., the subsidiary of Cargill, Inc. that produced the meat. The remaining issues are scheduled to be heard in court July 7. The Kriefall family settlement includes \$8.5 million from Excel and \$2 million from E&B Management Co. of Waukesha, the franchise holder for the two restaurants that have since closed. The \$2 million was paid by Excel after E&B argued it was responsible for E&B's damages. Sizzler USA is seeking \$12 million in lost business. E&B Management Co. of Waukesha is seeking additional money. Secura Insurance, E&B's insurer, has paid out \$2.5 million. A little less than \$1.5 million of the Secura settlement went to 140 others sickened during the outbreak. Because the child was sickened by eating cross contaminated fruit, attorneys for Excel argue that the restaurant was negligent in training and supervising employees in the safe handling of meat.

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Associations Raise Issues with Potential Mandatory Hold Policy

SMA was joined by several other associations in submitting a letter to USDA Undersecretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond to raise several issues the associations believe must be considered before the agency considers any potential policy that would mandate the holding of affected product whenever FSIS samples for pathogens. The letter was prompted by a recent letter from the American Meat Institute that voiced a position taken by the AMI board of directors to support "an agency policy that product tested by FSIS, subject to company lotting and control procedures, not be allowed to enter, or be used on product that would enter, commerce until the test results became available." In response, the group of associations urged the Undersecretary to move in a transparent and deliberate process that allows for consideration of several potentially harmful outcomes of such a policy. Members that wish to receive a copy of the letter should contact the SMA office.

Beef Import Negotiations with S. Korea Remain Unresolved

The U.S. and South Korea said today that high-level talks aimed at resolving a crisis in Seoul over renewing imports of American beef will continue. The U.S. Trade Representative's office said that weekend talks in Washington had ended without a resolution and that South Korean Trade Minister Kim Jong-hoon would return home. The talks, which focused on the importation of U.S. beef from cattle younger than 30 months of age, came as thousands of people protested in Seoul, demanding that a beef import deal settled in April be renegotiated and urging South Korean President Lee Myung-bak to resign. Kim headed to New York late on Sunday, where he was to fly back to Seoul, but the U.S. proposed that the two sides hold more consultations, South Korea said. U.S. Trade Representative spokeswoman Gretchen Hamel said that the trade envoys had held "frank and candid discussions" Friday and Saturday, but, "in order to find a mutually acceptable solution, both sides need more time to look into technical issues." Lee has vowed not to allow the import of beef from cattle older than 30 months, but the Bush administration has said that it will not renegotiate an accord that was supposed to have settled a major irritant in ties between the allies. Washington supports beef packaging labels that would show the ages of slaughtered cows. Both sides have repeatedly insisted that U.S. beef is safe, citing the World Organization for Animal Health, but Lee has come under intense criticism for allegedly ignoring public concerns over the safety of U.S. beef. Protests continue as a crowd of about 2,000 rallied Sunday night near the city hall and marched through Seoul.

Register Now to Attend SMA's 52nd Annual Convention & Suppliers' Showcase



July 16-19, 2008
Camelback Inn
Scottsdale, AZ

Registration forms & information are available on our website at www.southwestmeat.org. Please make your hotel reservations early; call the Camelback Inn at 480-948-1700 or use the link on our website. Our room block expires June 25th!

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Qualified applicants should send resumes to jarrod@sanangelopacking.com or fax to 325-658-7272.

Welcome, New Member!

SMA is proud to introduce our newest member: Arrowsight, Inc.

45 Kensico Drive • Mount Kisco, NY 10549
Phone: 914-919-1650 • Fax: 325-202-0415
Website: www.arrowsight.com

Adam Aronson, CEO • Mark Mosier, President Mfg. Division
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Briefly . . .

Tyson Sues USDA Over Antibiotic-free Labeling: Tyson Foods Inc has sued the U.S. Department of Agriculture over its rules for labeling chicken raised without antibiotics. In a lawsuit filed last Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Washington D.C., Tyson called itself a “victim” of a flawed regulatory process that misinterprets the meaning of the word “raised” and haphazardly applies its standard among different companies. Tyson, the second-largest U.S. chicken producer, earlier this month said it was voluntarily withdrawing its labels for chicken raised without antibiotics due to what it called at the time “uncertainty and controversy over product labeling regulations.” The company has said it was informed by the USDA last May that it could use the “raised without antibiotics” label, only to have the department reverse that decision. Undersecretary for Food Safety, Dr. Richard Raymond said in a statement that the company was ordered to rescind the label claim after “FSIS found that they routinely used the antibiotic Gentamicin to prevent illness and death in chicks.” In the lawsuit, Tyson claims the rule was improperly adopted, seeks to have it set aside, and asks to engage in a public comment process with the department on its standards.

“Food Before Fuel Campaign” Launched: A coalition of more than 20 environmental, retail, agricultural, transportation, and food industry groups and companies called the “Food Before Fuel” Campaign launched a cooperative effort June 10 urging Congress to reevaluate the nation’s grain-based ethanol crisis. Converting more than one-third of all U.S. corn to ethanol, with additional subsidies and tariffs further promoting the diversion of food to fuel, is currently mandated by Congressional policies that have contributed to record food price inflation. The group cites experts that claim that the U.S. food-to-fuel policy is responsible for more than 30% of food price inflation globally. Members encourage policy makers to “revisit and restructure policies that have increased our reliance on food as an energy source, and to carefully address how to develop alternative fuels that do not pit our energy needs against affordable food and environmental sustainability.” To learn how you can support this effort, visit www.foodb4fuel.com.

Smithfield Names New CFO: Robert W. Manly IV, executive vice president of Smithfield Foods, Inc., has been named to the additional position of chief financial officer, effective July 1. Manly is a 30-year veteran of fresh pork processing, packaged meats and live hog production. He rejoined Smithfield Foods as executive vice president in August of 2006 after 10 years as president and chief operating officer of Premium Standard Farms. “Bo Manly’s unique mix of financial, operating and general management experience along with his broad understanding of the industry will bring further strength to the finance organization,” said C. Larry Pope, president and chief executive officer. “His experience as president and chief operating officer of Premium Standard Farms, a publicly traded company, is demonstrative of the breadth of his management and operational background.” Manley will also retain responsibility for international hog production operations, as well as integrated plant operations in Mexico and Romania.

FSIS Podcasts Offer Tips on Food Defense: The first food defense podcast was posted on June 11, describing the functions of FSIS’ Office of Food Defense and Emergency Response. Additional topics to be posted will include: What It Means to You (June 18) and How to Develop a Food Defense Plan (June 25). Next month’s topics include, Reducing the Insider Threat (July 2) and Emergency Support Function 11 (July 16), addressing how USDA serves coordinates emergency support with industry, state and local governments when meat and poultry and egg products are involved in large-scale incidents, such as natural disasters or acts of terrorism. Podcasts are available www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/Food_Safety_Inspection_Podcasts/index.asp.