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FSIS Issues Notice on Export of Imported Natural Casings

Yesterday, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service issued Notice 74-08, entitled "Export Certification of Imported Natural Casings." This Notice reissues the content of FSIS Notice 69-06 in its entirety, and expires on the 11/26/08 implementation date of Directive 9000.2, "Inspection and Export Certification of Livestock Intestines or Casings," available at www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/9000.2.pdf. Questions and answers regarding inspection and export certification are provided at the end of the Directive. This notice instructs inspection program personnel on what is required to certify for export natural casings that were imported from other countries. Since natural casings are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), FSIS personnel do not reinspect imported casings and do not apply the USDA mark of inspection to them. Inspection program personnel can only certify imported natural casings for export, in accordance with 9 CFR 350.3, as a voluntary reimbursable service, and as set out in FSIS Directive 9000.1, Revision 1. Inspection program personnel will certify for export natural casings that were imported into the U.S. provided that they can determine that all of the natural casings in the shipment presented for export certification meet the following conditions:

1. The animals from which the imported natural casings were derived were slaughtered in a country that has an equivalent inspection system to that of the United States for that species;
2. A certificate signed by an official of the government of the country where the animals were slaughtered accompanies the imported casings stating: "I hereby certify that the animal casings herein described were derived from healthy animals (cattle, sheep, swine, or goats), which received antemortem and postmortem veterinary inspection at the time of slaughter, are clean and sound, and were prepared and handled only in a sanitary manner and were not subjected to contagion prior to exportation."
3. The country to which the natural casings are being exported does not restrict the importation of such casings. If the above conditions are met, inspection program personnel will, upon request of the exporter, issue FSIS Form 9060-18, Animal Casings Export Certificate for Countries Requiring Ante-mortem, Post-mortem, and Sound and Clean Statements, to certify imported natural casings for export. Certifying imported natural casings for export is a reimbursable service as described in 9 CFR 350.3(b). Direct questions regarding this notice to the Policy Development Division through askFSIS at <http://askfsis.custhelp.com> or by calling 800-233-3935. For a brief summary of Directive 9000.2 by SMA legal counsel Olsson, Frank & Weeda, P.C., please email phyllis@southwestmeat.org.

FSIS Issues Notice on Turkey Line Speeds

FSIS issued Notice 70-08 announcing the final rule allowing bar-type cut turkey operations to use j-type cut maximum line speeds on October 20, 2008. Under this final rule, there are no new responsibilities for inspection program personnel. As under the current regulations effective October 8, the inspector in charge is to reduce line speeds when, in his or her judgment, the prescribed inspection procedure cannot be adequately performed within the time available because of the health conditions of a particular flock or because of other factors. Such factors include the manner in which birds are being presented to the inspector and the level of contamination among the birds on the line. To review this notice in detail, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/70-08.pdf.

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FSIS Posts Draft Labeling Guidance for N-60 Testing

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has posted draft labeling policy guidance for the use of N-60 testing claims for boneless beef manufacturing trimmings concerning E. coli O157:H7. The draft guidance provides information to establishments concerning the conditions needed to use such claims on their raw beef products. The use of labels bearing such claims are voluntary, however; they must be approved by FSIS. Also, labels bearing this claim would not be approved on products sold at retail or direct sale to consumers. Most importantly, these claims could provide the company receiving the product with greater assurance regarding prior controls for E. coli O157:H7 than certificates of analysis (COAs) currently provide. Many small and very small establishments have indicated that they have difficulty receiving COAs either from the distributor or supplier establishment. The draft guidance was discussed at the October 14 and 15 public meeting regarding E. coli O157:H7 sampling and testing procedures. FSIS is requesting comments and if appropriate, will revise the document based on comments received. To review this compliance guideline, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Labeling_Guidance_N60_Testing.pdf. Comments are to be submitted on or before November 15 to FSISGuidanceDocumentComments@fsis.usda.gov. All submissions will be posted to the FSIS website.

GIPSA: Swine Contractors Subject to P&S Act

USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) has published a final rule that adds "swine contractors" to the list of regulated entities subject to specific regulations issued under the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) [7 USC § 181-229]. In the preamble to the rule, GIPSA asserted that adding swine contractors to specific regulations under the P&S Act will assist swine contractors and production contract growers in determining which regulations apply to them. In addition, according to GIPSA, the change will make it easier for the agency to identify potential violators and enforce the provisions of the P&S Act. The final rule amends the regulations to clarify that swine contractors: 1) are prohibited from knowingly circulating misleading reports about market conditions or prices; 2) are required to provide business information to authorized GIPSA personnel; and 3) are required to permit authorized GIPSA personnel to inspect their business records and facilities. Additionally, GIPSA clarified that agents and GIPSA personnel are prohibited from unauthorized disclosure of business information obtained from swine contractors. The final rule becomes effective November 20, 2008 and is available online at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-24945.pdf>.

Advertise Now in the 2009 SMA Membership Directory!

We are currently accepting ads for the 2009 SMA Membership Directory. Here is your chance to promote your products and services to our membership all year long! If you need more information about prices or specifications, please call the SMA office or email Phyllis at phyllis@southwestmeat.org. Hurry! The deadline for advertising is November 14th!

Also, if you haven't already done so, please take a few moments to review your directory listing and submit any changes. Current information will make SMA's 2009 edition more accurate and useful for the upcoming year!

OFFICE CLOSED

The SMA office will be closed Monday, November 3, while we attend our quarterly Board of Directors meeting in San Antonio, TX. We will be checking telephone messages regularly if you need to reach us. **InfoMeat** will be published next on Tuesday, November 4th!



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**Does Your HACCP Plan Need An Update?
Are You Ready for an FSIS EIAO Review?**

Register now for "Beyond Basics: HACCP Plan Improvement Workshop for Raw and Cooked Product Operations," hosted by SMA, NMA, and the TAMU Department of Animal Science, **November 6-7, 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. Workshop topics will include: flow chart review & evaluation, review and scientific support of hazard analysis, defending the selection of CCPs, supporting monitoring and verification frequencies, HACCP plan validation schemes, compiling decision making & supporting documentation. Registration information and course outline are available on our website.

Sign up today!



POSITION AVAILABLE
Southside Market & BBQ, Inc.
is looking for a **Plant Manager**.

This key position offers a competitive compensation and benefits package. Job duties include managing all plant operations. Qualified candidates will have 5+ years experience, preferably in sausage production, be HACCP certified and bilingual, and possess strong leadership and computer skills with experience in personnel and budget management, scheduling, new product development, and production efficiency improvements. To apply for this position, please send a cover letter and resume to:

dmanhart@southsidemarket.com

Briefly . . .

DOJ Sues to Block JBS Acquisition of National Beef: The Department of Justice and attorneys general for 13 states filed suit against Brazilian beef producer JBS S.A. and National Beef Packing Co. of Kansas City, MO to block an acquisition deal that could increase costs for consumers and drive down prices paid to ranchers and feedlots. In March, JBS had said it would acquire National Beef in a \$560 million stock-and-cash deal, which would make it the nation's largest beef processor. It also announced plans to buy Smithfield Beef Group Inc., the nation's fifth-largest beef producer, for \$565 million. The Department of Justice (DOJ) said it is not challenging that deal, only the deal with the larger player, which would combine two of the top four U.S. beef packers. JBS said in a statement last Monday that it planned to immediately complete the buyout of Smithfield Beef and that it, like National Beef, would "vigorously defend" the lawsuit.

California Ballot Measure Offers Farm Animal Rights: On November 4, California voters will be asked to decide on Proposition 2, an animal rights ballot measure that would eliminate farm animal confinement in restrictive cages, such as those used in many chicken, pork and veal operations. Because veal and pork are not major industries in California, the battle over Proposition 2 is focused almost exclusively on the state's henhouses, which opponents say will be hard hit by higher production costs if the measure passes. "This is a well-intended initiative for animals with some very negative unintended consequences for people," said Julie Buckner, a spokeswoman for Californians for Safe Food, the leading anti-Proposition 2 group. "It's going to wipe out the California egg farmers, and it's going to raise the food costs for consumers."

E. coli Vaccine Approved in Canada: Yesterday, Bioniche Life Sciences Inc. a Canadian biopharmaceutical company, announced that Econiche™, the world's first vaccine designed to reduce the shedding by cattle of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, has received full licensing approval from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Econiche™ is now available for unrestricted use by Canadian cattle producers and their veterinarians. The vaccine has the potential to significantly reduce the amount of *E. coli* O157 shed into the environment by beef and dairy cattle and, in turn, reduce the risk to human health. Clinical trials conducted with Econiche™ have shown a significant reduction in the amount of *E. coli* shed in the manure of vaccinated cows. Bioniche Life Sciences Inc. is concurrently working to meet the requirements for a U.S. conditional license for the vaccine.