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Email: sma@tca.net
Internet website: www.southwestmeat.org

Edited by Phyllis Zimmerman

Mexico Reopens Market to U.S. Bone-in Beef

Last Wednesday Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns announced that Mexico has resumed trade in U.S. bone-in beef from animals under 30 months of age. "Mexico's decision to further open its market to U.S. beef is a testament to the safety of U.S. beef and a clear expression of confidence in the U.S. safeguards to prevent BSE," said Johanns. "As a NAFTA partner and our second largest export market, the normalization of beef trade with Mexico is great news for our farmers and ranchers. This action demonstrates Mexico's commitment to trade based on internationally accepted scientific standards for human and animal health." In March 2004, Mexico opened its market to boneless U.S. beef from animals under 30 months of age, which had closed following the December 2003 find of BSE in Washington state. In April 2005, to help normalize trade in ruminants and ruminant products within North America, Mexico, the United States and Canada agreed to harmonize their BSE risk mitigation measures to more effectively address any BSE risk in the region. U.S. beef exporters sold more than \$874 million worth of beef products to Mexico in 2003, with bone-in beef products accounting for \$40 million of that total.

OIG Releases Final Report on BSE Surveillance and Controls

On February 2, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General (OIG) publicly released its final report on Phase II and III of its ongoing investigation of USDA's BSE surveillance and controls program. The report contained 22 recommendations directed at the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The objectives of this audit were to evaluate the enforcement of the ban on specified risk materials and administration of FSIS' testing program for central nervous system (CNS) tissue and controls to prevent CNS tissue in meat from the advanced meat recovery systems. The audit also evaluated APHIS' and FSIS' actions in response to recommendations in the BSE Surveillance Program - Phase I audit report. The report affirmed the overall success of the BSE surveillance system and emphasized that after testing more than 605,000 at-risk animals, experts agree that the public health risk of BSE in the U.S. is essentially zero. "We're proud to say that through the on-going dedication of USDA employees as well as industry and an investment of about \$1 million a week since the program began—this effort has been more successful and informative than even we predicted when we started more than 19 months ago," said Dr. Ron DeHaven, APHIS Administrator. "On average, we test nearly 1,000 high-risk cattle a day for BSE and only 1 out of more than 605,000 animals has tested positive for the disease. While our formal review of the program, which will determine what statistical conclusions we can draw about the prevalence of BSE is still pending, certainly it would not be premature to say that by any measure the incidence of BSE in the United States is extremely low," he added. "As with any on-going program, and particularly one of this magnitude that was scaled up in such a short timeframe, it's vitally important to continually evaluate protocols and conduct quality assurance efforts, and to make changes as science evolves or more efficient approaches are identified. We've done that since the enhanced program was first established and we'll continue to do that as we move forward." Additionally, the report found that no Specified Risk Materials (SRMs) have entered the food supply. The OIG has approved all of APHIS' and FSIS' proposed actions in response to the recommendations contained in the report. A significant number of the recommendations were already addressed by the agencies. "FSIS is confident it is successfully carrying out its mission to protect public health. Strict enforcement of the SRM ban, coupled with government safeguards on cattle feed and USDA BSE surveillance programs, form the interlocking BSE safeguards that continue to protect consumers from BSE. Working with OIG, FSIS will continuously evaluate its policies and procedures to ensure they are the strongest they can be," said FSIS Administrator Dr. Barbara Masters.

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

to be held at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, **March 7-9, 2006**, hosted by SMA and the Texas A&M Department of Animal Science. Registration forms are available on our website at southwestmeat.org, or by contacting the SMA office.

Sign up today!

FSIS to Issue Directives and Notices

As a public health regulatory agency, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) publishes directives and notices to enable the Agency to carry out its mission of protecting public health. Within the next month, FSIS expects to issue the following directives and notices:

Directives

- 5100.3, Rev. 1 - *Administrative Enforcement Report* FSIS is revising this directive to clarify who may take photographs and when.
- 5220.2 - *Issuance of a Ten-day Letter for Inactive Operations* This directive sets out the actions that a district manager may take with an establishment that is not operating or has not responded to district office inquiries as to its operational status and intentions.
- 9000.1 - *Export Certification* FSIS is reissuing this directive to clarify current Agency policy regarding the export certification process. This directive clarifies the process if an FSIS certifying official feels that he or she is unable to sign an export certificate and makes it clear that a facsimile of FSIS Form 9060-6 may be used to provide the information requested in that form. It also clarifies the purpose of the export library and other aspects of the directive.
- 9040.1, Rev. 3 - *Re-inspection of Product Intended for Export* This directive has been revised to provide for the examination of boxes or containers in situations where inspection program personnel have a reason to question whether products offered for export are properly labeled.
- 10,240.4, Rev. 1 - *Verification Procedures for the Listeria monocytogenes (Lm)-PHASE 2* This revision provides additional sampling procedures related to *Lm*. This was a notice that is now being changed into two directives.
- 10,240.5 - *Assessment of the Listeria monocytogenes (Lm) Regulations-PHASE 2* This directive provides enforcement, investigations and analysis officers with instructions regarding environmental sampling and methodology for assessments based on lab results.

Notices (Numbers are assigned as notices are issued)

- *PBIS Profile Extension Instructions on Food Defense Plans* - This notice provides instructions to inspectors-in-charge for completing the profile extension about an establishment's food defense plan.
- *Importation of Canadian Cattle, Sheep and Goats into the United States* - This notice provides instructions to FSIS personnel regarding the receipt, slaughter and inspection of certain ruminants imported from Canada. Regulatory requirements for the importation of certain Canadian ruminants began 3/7/05 and applies to cattle, sheep and goats.
- *Certifying Beef Products under Export Verification (EV) Programs* - This notice provides FSIS personnel with new instructions related to the FSIS certification process for beef products exported under EV programs. Primarily, this notice announces that an additional review of the certifying documents will be conducted by the Technical Service Center before the product may be shipped.

Welcome, New Member!

SMA is proud to introduce our newest member:

Quanta Lab

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Phone: 210-651-5799 • Fax: 210-651-9271

Mark Nickle, President

An accredited full service food and agriculture testing laboratory, offering many services including, but not limited to, audits, core drills, and HACCP plans; USDA certified

POSITION AVAILABLE

Quik-to-Fix Foods, a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, is a further processed, value added, multi-protein company looking for the following position: **Quality Assurance Manager**

This position will be responsible for overseeing plant quality assurance, HACCP, sanitation, microbiology laboratory, and food safety functions in the production environment. The successful candidate will have B.S. degree in a technical discipline directly related to the job (i.e. food or meat science), 2-3 years experience in food industry or an M.S. degree in a scientific field with 1-2 years experience. Contact Laurie Walker, Director of Human Resources, at 972-205-1460 or resumes may be sent to walker@qtffoods.com.

Briefly . . .

FSIS Directive Offers Sample Collection Guide for *Salmonella* Analysis: The FSIS Directive 10,230.5, Amendment 1 "Self-instruction Guide for Collecting Raw Meat and Poultry Product Samples for *Salmonella* Analysis" has been updated to make the actual guide available in .pdf format on-line. The Guide is over 60 pages and discusses how to take raw meat and poultry samples for *Salmonella* analysis. It includes pictures of techniques used in the actual sampling. The FSIS Directive may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/10230-5.pdf. The actual guide, "*Salmonella* Analysis - Collecting Raw Meat and Poultry Samples" may be viewed at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/Salmonella_Analysis.pdf.

ConAgra to Sell Refrigerated Meats Business: ConAgra Foods Inc., one of North America's leading packaged food companies, announced plans to divest most of its refrigerated meats businesses, including the Armour, Butterball, and Eckrich brands. In addition, the company announced several changes designed to streamline its operating structure, including moving its Grocery Foods headquarters from Irvine, CA to Naperville, IL, and further centralizing its shared services. The sale doesn't include ConAgra's Healthy Choice, Hebrew National, Slim Jim and Pemmican brands. For the fiscal year ended in May 2005, ConAgra had sales of \$14.6 billion and net income of \$641.5 million. Last week ConAgra announced that Smithfield Foods Inc. would acquire most of its Cook's refrigerated ham business.

Tyson to Market Natural Beef: Tyson Foods, Inc. and CertifiedAngus Beef LLC have developed a joint effort to provide CertifiedAngus Beef® (CAB) brand Natural beef, the two organizations announced on January 17. Tyson will also soon begin offering Star Ranch NaturalAngus Beef. "The CAB brand and Star Ranch Angus Beef have been very successful programs for Tyson and we're excited to add 'natural' product lines to both," said Noel White, group vice president of Tyson Fresh Meats. "Consumer demand for natural beef is increasing and we believe there's an opportunity for us to grow with it. While we have every confidence in our traditional beef products, we also believe in giving our customers a choice." The beef products will come from cattle that have never received antibiotics or hormones and have been given a 100% grass and grain diet. They will be black Angus, source verified to birth and fed in "natural" designated feed yards. The Beef Marketing Group (BMG), a cooperative of Kansas and Nebraska feed yards, is the first cattle feeding organization to participate in the initiative. Tyson-supplied CAB brand Natural and Star Ranch Natural products will be available to retail and foodservice customers on a limited basis beginning in February. The products are expected to complement the traditional offering in the retail meat case and also meet the demands of the natural foods retailer.

FSIS Issues Q&As on Verifications for Mechanically Tenderized Beef: FSIS has issued a new set of questions and answers (Q&As) pertaining to FSIS Notice 32-05, *Verification of Establishment's Reassessment of HACCP Plans to Address Mechanically Tenderized Beef*. The Technical Service Center serves as FSIS' center for technical assistance, advice and guidance regarding the implementation of national policies, programs, systems and procedures. To view the "TSC Q&A" page, visit FSIS' website at www.fsis.usda.gov/About_FSIS/Technical_Service_Center/index.asp. Questions regarding the Q&As should be addressed to the Technical Service Center at 800-233-3935.

Export Requirement Updates: The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for the following: Canada, European Union, Lebanon, People's Republic of China, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Complete information can be found at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.



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DIRECTORY CORRECTION



The phone number listed for **Choice! Energy Services** in your 2006 Membership Directory is incorrect. The correct phone number is **713-358-5413**. Please note this correction in the Associate section of your book.

Please notify us of any Directory corrections so we may inform members and make changes in future publications.