



InfoMeat

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FSIS Announces Initiative to Reduce Salmonella in Meat, Poultry

On Friday, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announced a comprehensive initiative to reduce the presence of *Salmonella* in raw meat and poultry products. "Our goal is to work proactively to reduce the presence of *Salmonella* on raw products before plants develop a pattern of poor performance," said USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond. "FSIS will more quickly report testing results and target establishments needing improvement, providing timely information to both consumers and industry." The initiative will include concentrating resources at establishments with higher levels of *Salmonella* and changes the reporting and utilization of FSIS *Salmonella* verification test results. The effort is patterned after the highly successful FSIS initiative to reduce the presence of *E. coli* O157:H7 in ground beef. The FSIS *E. coli* O157:H7 initiative led to a 40% reduction in human illnesses associated with the pathogen, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Central to the *E. coli* O157:H7 model's success was a collective acknowledgement by industry that this food safety hazard needed to be addressed in all their food safety systems. Certain serotypes of *Salmonella*, which are known to cause human illness, are commonly found in raw meat and poultry. Other food sources, such as produce and eggs, are also known to cause salmonellosis. Where FSIS has performed Food Safety Assessments (FSAs) in establishments that have persistently poor performance records for controlling *Salmonella*, there has been a dramatic reduction in levels of the pathogen, clearly demonstrating that establishments can indeed control the incidence of *Salmonella* in the raw products they produce. FSAs are comprehensive, systematic evaluations of a firm's food safety system performed by Enforcement, Investigation and Analysis Officers (EIAOs). The Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (PR/HACCP) rule, implemented July 25, 1996, established *Salmonella* performance standards for the first time in seven categories of raw meat and poultry products: broilers; market hogs; cows/bulls; steers/heifers; ground beef; ground chicken; and ground turkey. FSIS collects and analyzes *Salmonella* samples as one part of an extensive science-based food safety verification system and publishes the data annually in aggregate form. Since 2002, FSIS has seen an increase in *Salmonella* positive samples in broilers, and while the overall percentage is still below national baseline prevalence figures, the recent upward trend is of concern to the Agency. According to the strategy, which is described in a *Federal Register* notice to be published today, FSIS will now provide the results of its *Salmonella* performance standard testing to establishments as soon as they become available on a sample-by-sample basis. This will enable establishments to more readily identify and respond to needed process control in the slaughter-dressing operation. Receiving individual sample results soon after the samples are taken will help establishments in their assessment of whether their slaughter dressing procedures are adequate for pathogen reduction. Currently, establishments receive results after the sample set is completed (for broilers a sample set consists of 51 consecutive days of sampling). FSIS will also begin quarterly posting on its website of the nationwide aggregate results of all sample results to give consumers more complete and timely information about *Salmonella* trends. FSIS will also plan to more quickly have the serotype of *Salmonella* found in positive samples determined in order to notify the establishment and monitor and investigate illness outbreaks in coordination with federal, state and local public health agencies. Comments on the notice must be received on or before May 30, 2006, and must be sent to Docket Clerk, #04-026N, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, 300 12th Street, S.W., Room 102 Cotton Annex, Washington, D.C., 20250. Comments will also be posted on the Agency's Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/2006_notices_index.asp.

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FSIS Issues Notice on Export Stamp Manufacturing Error

FSIS issued Notice 8-06 on Thursday, February 23 to announce an export stamp manufacturing error. Due to a manufacturing error, a recent batch of FSIS export stamps received at the FSIS Field Supply Center was not in the format described in the Code of Federal Regulations. The incorrect stamps were distributed with an "H" to the left and right of the certificate number instead of a star. Office of Field Operations (OFO) personnel possessing export stamps shown in Notice 8-06 under the "example of an incorrect stamp" should stop using the incorrect stamps immediately for any export activity including marking boxes and for application to certificates. Only stamps in the format indicated in the regulations and shown in the notice should be used. OFO personnel should not return the stamps; however they should cut off or deface the rubber imprinting of the seal. District managers may need to reallocate correct versions of export stamps among establishments until they are again available in the Field Supply Center. The notice is available on FSIS' website at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Notice_08-06/index.asp. Contact the Technical Service Center with questions at 800-233-3935.

Associations Seek Clarification on GIPSA Marketing Study

The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) recently sent letters to a substantial number of beef, pork and lamb packers and processors seeking their cooperation in a Congressionally-mandated study of the use of alternative marketing arrangements in the livestock and meat industry. The letters request that daily transactions data for purchases and sales and weekly profit and loss statements for a 2.5 year period be sent to RTI International (RTI), a not-for-profit contract research institute engaged by GIPSA to conduct the marketing study. Establishments have been asked to provide the information by April 14, 2006. Since these letters were sent, questions have been raised regarding the study and the agency's authority to compel the production of the requested data. Currently, trade associations representing the industry are in discussions with GIPSA regarding the nature and extent of the data that must be submitted. Establishments may submit data in either the electronic format prescribed by RTI or in the format already used for its own data. If an establishment uses its own format, it must include a "data dictionary" with its submission. We are advising members to immediately complete the form for designating each establishment's contact person. Hopefully, GIPSA will provide clarification regarding details of the nature and extent of the data covered by its request. Pending such clarification, companies should evaluate what data might be responsive to GIPSA's request and prepare to make that data available if it becomes necessary, recognizing that the details of what is required may be subject to further clarification. For a copy of a memo on this issue from legal counsel Olsson, Frank and Weeda, P.C., please email Phyllis at sma@tca.net or call the SMA office.

FSIS to Review Four State Inspection Systems

FSIS began comprehensive reviews of the 28 state meat and poultry inspection programs in 2003. The reviews were initiated due to an increased agency emphasis on review of all FSIS programs and activities and because report language for the 2002 Farm Bill called for USDA to provide Congress with a report on a full review of state inspection programs. As part of this effort, FSIS created a review manual that contains a two-part methodology for the state reviews: annual self assessments by the states and FSIS on-site reviews. The self assessments are completed each year. To date, FSIS has conducted on-site reviews in 20 randomly selected states. In April, FSIS will begin on-site reviews of state inspection systems in Indiana, Louisiana, Maine and West Virginia.



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

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, **April 6-7, 2006** 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. Registration information and course outline are available on our website.

Sign up today!

Bird Flu Spreading Across EU

Switzerland confirmed its first case of avian influenza in a wild duck found dead in Geneva. Officials said it was not yet clear if the wild bird, found Wednesday, was infected with the deadly H5N1 strain of the virus. Swiss authorities sent a sample of the duck's tissue to a reference laboratory in Britain to test for the H5N1 strain. Results are expected by the end of the week, Maret said. Switzerland has been on high alert for the disease since the virus was confirmed in neighboring countries. Earlier this month, Switzerland ordered all poultry be kept indoors for an indefinite period to lessen the risk from contracting the H5N1 strain of the virus from migrating wild birds. The Swiss Federal Veterinary Office said that in addition to the Geneva case, two wild ducks have tested positive for bird flu in the German towns of Ohningen and Singen, near Lake Constance in eastern Switzerland. The European Union now has nine nations that have confirmed H5N1 cases: Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Switzerland. Germany has also reported its first H5N1 case in domestic birds, in a small flock in the northern state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. It is not yet known how many of the country's farm flocks may have to be culled. The European Commission has given permission to France and the Netherlands to carry out targeted preventive vaccination campaigns on poultry, as a precautionary measure. The French program entails the vaccination of ducks and geese in areas at high risk of AI and the Netherlands' vaccination plan applies to hobby poultry and to free-range laying hens throughout the entire country.

Briefly . . .

Croatia Reports First Case of BSE: Croatian television recently reported the first case of BSE in Croatia. The Veterinary Institute said that a three-fold analysis of samples of the brain of the dead animal confirmed with a high degree of probability the presence of BSE. The case involves a five-year-old cow that was born in Croatia of parents from Austria. All legal measures have been applied at the owner's farm and the abattoir where the cow was slaughtered. Samples were sent to the laboratory in Weybridge in Great Britain for confirmation.

SMA, Industry Organizations Oppose User Fees: SMA joined AMI and over 40 other food and agriculture organizations in sending a letter to every member of Congress urging rejection of new inspection user fees that were included in the 2007 USDA budget proposal. The letter addressed the fact that new user fees are essentially a food safety tax for a federally mandated public health and safety program. The new fees, which would be passed on to the consumer in higher prices, would put meat, poultry and egg products at a competitive disadvantage.

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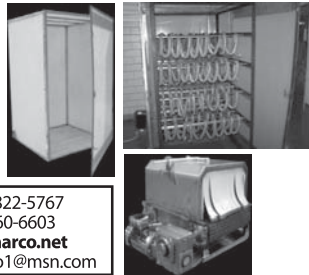
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Mark Your Calendars

- Mar 7-9 Developing and Implementing HACCP Plans for the Meat Industry - Texas A&M University, College Station, TX
- Mar 30 SMA Board of Directors Meeting - Bryan, TX
- Apr 6-7 Beyond Basics: HACCP Plan Improvement Workshop - Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

POSITION AVAILABLE

Quik-to-Fix Foods, a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, is a further processed, value added, multi protein company looking for a **Quality Assurance Supervisor**. The position will be responsible for overseeing shift quality assurance, HACCP, 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 is preferred, but entry level applicants will be considered with the appropriate education. Contact Stacey Buford, Director of Human Resources, at **972-205-1460** or resumes may be sent to sbuford@qtffoods.com