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Japan Halts U.S. Beef Imports

Japan halted American beef imports Friday morning after reports that officials there discovered a shipment of veal containing vertebral column. The Japanese Prime Minister halted exports based on the recommendation from the Minister of Agriculture. The Ministry stated that inspectors found beef with vertebral column attached in three out of 41 boxes of frozen beef which was imported from a firm in New York. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns was quick to reply, "While this is not a food-safety issue, this is an unacceptable failure on our part to meet the requirements of our agreement with Japan. We take this matter very seriously." Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters Friday that it was "extremely important to secure the food safety for the Japanese people." It is not clear how long the new ban will remain in place. The tissue Japan found, spinal column from veal, is allowed in the American food supply because it comes from animals younger than 30 months. However, the agreement with Japan bans spinal column and other specified risk material (SRMS). Due to the sensitivity of the issue, Johanns announced he was dispatching a team of USDA inspectors to Japan to work with Japanese inspectors to re-examine every beef shipment. Department officials said that, for now, American beef is being held at Japanese ports until the USDA completes a report on what happened, which Johanns intends to deliver "immediately." In the meantime, Johanns said the Brooklyn-based Atlantic Veal & Lamb, the plant that sent the shipment, was banned from selling meat to Japan. Federal inspectors who approved the shipment were also put on notice. "We will take appropriate personnel action against the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service employee who conducted the inspection of the product in question and approved it to be shipped to Japan," he said. The USDA has ordered unannounced inspections at every processing plant that is approved to ship beef overseas. Johanns said he would try to reassure other Asian countries that followed the lead of Japan, which six weeks ago ended a ban on American beef imposed after the discovery of BSE in the United States in December 2003. Before this latest incident, U.S. officials were optimistic about selling more beef to Asia. South Korea and Singapore just lifted their bans in recent weeks. Despite the quick U.S. response to calm consumer concerns in Asia, the incident is a setback for the U.S. beef market. "This simply shouldn't have happened," Johanns said.

Canadian Cow Confirmed Positive for BSE

A cow from an Alberta farm has tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), Canadian officials confirmed today. Dr. Brian Evans, Canada's chief veterinary officer, said the disease was found in an animal about 6 years old. Evans said it did not enter the human food or animal-feed systems. The announcement came after the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's spokesman, Mark Van Dusen, said Sunday that officials were testing a "suspicious sample." Based on the information supplied by the Canadian Agriculture Minister, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said that he does not anticipate any change in the status of beef or live cattle imports to the U.S. from Canada under the current established agreement. "As I've said many times, our beef trade decisions follow internationally accepted guidelines that are based in science," said Johanns. "We will continue to evaluate this situation as the investigation continues. I have directed our USDA team to work with Canada and its investigative team. Minister Mitchell has pledged his full cooperation." Johanns added, "I am confident in the safety of beef and in the safeguards we and our approved beef trading partners have in place to protect our food supply. We will continue to adhere to international guidelines in our relationships with all trading partners, and my hope continues to be that we achieve a system of science-based global beef trade." The Government of Canada is currently conducting an epidemiological investigation to identify, among other things, the source of the animal's feed and other animals that may have been exposed to that feed.

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USDA Announces Critical Food Defense Exercises

Last week USDA announced additional efforts in collaboration with states and private industry to protect the nation's food supply from terrorist threats. "Ensuring the safety of our nation's food supply remains a top priority for President Bush and USDA," said Dr. Richard Raymond, USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety. "We remain steadfast in our commitment to work with our federal, state and private sector partners so that we can keep our agricultural commodities safe." USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) will conduct five critical food defense exercises this year. The first exercise took place in Alameda, California on January 18 and 19. The exercises are designed to practice reporting a non-routine incident while coordinating with all levels of government, non-governmental agencies and the private sector in an incident command system structure. These exercises are intended to challenge all participants to collaborate more closely and become better prepared to keep the food supply safe. The first day of the exercise focuses on non-routine incident reporting and how program offices manage an emergency and the second day focuses on product recall and public health and communication issues. Additionally, FSIS will test its ability to coordinate with organizations outside of USDA, such as the local and state departments of health and agriculture, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as the affected industries. Additional food defense exercises will be conducted in Raleigh, NC on March 22-23; Chicago, IL on May 17-18; Minneapolis, MN on July 19-20; and Albany, NY on Sept. 20-21. FSIS will eventually conduct similar exercises in all 15 FSIS regional district offices. In March, USDA and FDA will jointly assess frozen foods in Wisconsin and Florida and USDA plans to conduct an assessment on swine with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and the National and Iowa Pork Producers. Additional information about agrosecurity can be found on USDA's website at: www.usda.gov/homelandsecurity.

Pork Checkoff, Industry Partner to Sequence the Swine Genome

The Pork Checkoff, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), state pork associations and research institutions have partnered with international organizations to support sequencing the swine genome. The effort garnered over \$30 million in funding toward the international project, led in the U.S. by the University of Illinois. "The National Pork Board, through the Pork Checkoff, played an important role in promoting the value of this research for the industry," said Mark Boggess, director of animal science for the Pork Checkoff. "In late January 2005, USDA credited America's pork producers and their commitment to the swine genome mapping project and their leadership for ensuring additional funding was garnered from other sources." Through the Pork Checkoff, pork producers have committed \$750,000 to the genome mapping project. The swine genome project follows the genome sequencing of other domestic animal species, including bovine and chicken. With the sequence in hand, science will develop better tools for animal selection, including tools to fight diseases of high economic impact such as Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome, tools to improve production and even tools to advance the human medical field.

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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, or by contacting the SMA office.

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FSIS Notice Clarifies Instructions for Non-Ambulatory Cattle

Last week, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued Notice 05-06, "Re-examination of Bovine That Become Non-Ambulatory After Passing Ante-mortem Inspection." This Notice is to provide inspection program personnel with clarification instructions related to FSIS Notice 05-04, "Interim Guidance for Non-ambulatory Disabled Cattle and Age Determination." Notice 05-04 had an original expiration date of February 1, 2005 which has since been extended to February 1, 2007. Notice 05-06 clarifies that the Public Health Veterinarian (PHV) is to "distinguish between true acute injuries that occur after the animal has passed ante-mortem and final manifestations of underlying chronic conditions." The PHV is to tag cattle with a "U.S. Suspect" tag if they determine an animal has suffered an acute injury (to better track such occurrences), and the animal may proceed to slaughter and post-mortem inspection. If the PHV cannot determine that an animal became non-ambulatory because of a specific, acute injury, the PHV is to tag the animal with a "U.S. Condemned" tag and the animal cannot enter the slaughter establishment. The Notice provides further instructions to the PHV as to which FSIS forms are to be used to record his or her observations. Questions regarding proper procedures are referred to the Technical Service Center. FSIS Notice 05-06 may be viewed online at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/05-06.pdf.

Briefly . . .

Korea Will Resume U.S. Beef Imports as Planned: Korea said Japan's decision to reinstate a ban on imports of U.S. beef will not affect the agreement between Seoul and Washington, D.C. to resume American beef imports at the end of March. Agriculture Ministry officials say Korea and Japan have different conditions and Korea will import only boneless beef, keeping its ban on bone imports. The ministry is watching Japan's case carefully and plans to strengthen the inspection process for beef imports.

FSIS Proposes Revising Accredited Laboratory Programs (ALP) Regulations: FSIS is proposing to revise, edit and consolidate provisions of the standards and procedures for the accreditation of non-Federal analytical chemistry laboratories. FSIS published a proposed rule in the January 17 *Federal Register* entitled, "Accredited Laboratory Program." Laboratories in the ALP are accredited to analyze official meat and poultry samples for specific chemical residues or classes of chemical residues, and moisture, protein, fat and salt. The agency proposed this action to amend its current regulations regarding the accreditation of non-Federal analytical chemistry laboratories to accommodate the adoption of newer methods for analyzing chemical residues and to correct some data. In addition, FSIS is proposing to consolidate the accredited laboratory regulations from 9 Code of Federal Regulations Part 318.21 of the meat inspection regulations and 9 CFR Part 381.153 of the poultry products inspection regulations into a single new part, 9 CFR Part 439, that is applicable to both meat and poultry establishments. The Agency is accepting comments until March 20. Comments may be submitted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov or by electronic mail at FSIS.RegulationsComments@usda.gov. This notice is available on the FSIS website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Frame/FrameRedirect.asp?main=/OPPDE/rdad/FRPubs/03-020P.htm.

Library of Export Requirements Is Updated: The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for Cuba and Japan. Complete information can be found at: www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Applications accepted for **Quality Assurance Director**. Bilingual in English and Spanish and education in Food or Meat Science preferred. Please send inquiries to **Yoakum Packing Co.**, 500 Front Street, Yoakum, TX 77995 361-293-3541, or email resumes to: glen@farmpac.com.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Rodriguez Foods in Fort Worth, TX is currently interviewing for **Quality Assurance Manager**: Oversee QA, R&D & HACCP while assisting management in evaluating production process. USDA plant experience required. Please email resume to: charles@rodriguezfoods.net or contact Brenda Gilby @ 817-270-1066 ext.11.



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