



# InfoMeat

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## **FSIS Issues Q&As on Certifying Casings for Export**

Last Wednesday, FSIS issued Notice 45-06, "Q&As for FSIS Notice 34-06, Certification of Intestines or Animal Casings for Export." This Notice was issued in response to questions received by the Agency regarding Notice 34-06, which was implemented on July 17, 2006. Notice 45-06 may be viewed at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/45-06.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/45-06.pdf) and Notice 34-06 may be viewed at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/34-06.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/34-06.pdf). Notice 45-06 contains four questions and answers and indicates that additional Q&As may be posted on the Technical Service Center website. The notice clarifies the following:

- 1 - If casings from an amenable species are to be certified for export as edible product by FSIS, the casings must bear the mark of inspection.
- 2 - While casing should be "visibly free of digestive tract contents," the zero tolerance standard for ingesta and fecal material "does not apply to intestines." Inspection program personnel are instructed to verify that an establishment uses good process control in cleaning the intestines and "makes reasonable efforts to remove contamination during cleaning and other processing of the product." The presence of some small amount of digestive tract material adhering to mainly the intestinal mucosal lining should not cause FSIS inspection personal to refuse to apply the mark of inspection. In addition, acceptability should be determined based on production lots and process controls instead of individual units. Office of Field Operations supervisory personnel will correlate with inspection program employees if necessary.
- 3 - The mucosa on the inner surface of the intestine does not need to be stripped away for the intestines to receive the mark of inspection.
- 4 - Intestines for use as casings may be prepared and shipped in commerce without the mark of inspection, but these cannot then be later certified by FSIS for export.

## **USDA Delays Rule on Importing Older Canadian Cattle**

USDA has put a hold on its proposed rule to allow importation of Canadian cattle over 30 months of age and beef products derived from them pending the conclusion of a joint investigation of Canada's latest case of BSE. Earlier this month, Canada's seventh case was confirmed in a 50-month old dairy cow born after the ruminant feed ban. There is no word from USDA on how long they will delay the release of the rule. "We believe it is prudent to hold the proposed rule until the joint investigation into how this animal may have been exposed to infected material is complete," said USDA spokesman Ed Loyd. "If no revisions to the proposed rule are needed, it will continue through the rule-making process as planned." To stop action on the proposed rule, USDA withdrew it from White House review, usually the last step before a regulation becomes final. USDA would also like to confirm that Canada's regulatory system is effectively protecting consumers and livestock. Canadian officials said they were seeking more information about the USDA decision, but played down any impact on its cattle industry. Alain Charette, spokesman for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, said the CFIA is in the second half of its investigation of the latest BSE case. Ag Secretary Mike Johanns is still committed to returning to normal trade with Canada, according to Loyd, and he said that holding the proposed rule has no impact on current trade regulations. Canadian ranchers said the delay was disappointing, but understandable.

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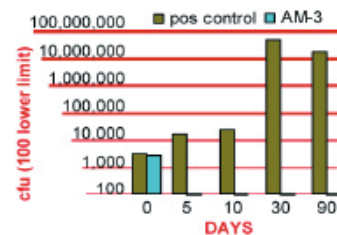
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## Japan Resumes U.S. Beef Imports

Last Thursday, Japanese officials announced the resumption of U.S. beef imports as long as strict requirements are sustained. The announcement is the latest in the quest to normalize global beef trade since a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was discovered in the U.S. in December 2003. Japan's Health, Labor and Welfare Minister, Jiro Kawasaki, according to reports, said that any error, such as spinal tissue discovered in a shipment that led to the closure of the newly re-opened border on January 20, will again shut off trade. He told Kyodo News that he would order a total ban again if the same violation occurs in the future. Kawasaki added that, despite some Japanese consumer groups' opposition to the trade resumption, the process happened "step-by-step," following necessary procedures in negotiations with the U.S. U.S. ambassador to Japan, J. Thomas Schieffer, said no shortage of proof of the safety of U.S. beef has been provided in resuming trade. "Since January, each step of our export verification system has been carefully re-examined, and has been reinforced to be even more robust than before," Schieffer said Thursday. "We are pleased that Japanese auditors and officials have found our process to be sound, and we are proud that our system is scientifically based and exceeds international standards." Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, while expressing relief that the process of resuming beef trade had finally yielded results, reflected on how such a situation might be better handled, rather than a complete halt of trade. "Nations need reasonable methods of addressing the inadvertent shipment of products that don't meet an importing country's specifications, without disrupting an entire trading relationship," he said. "The U.S. has such methods of addressing noncompliant shipments from Japan, as well as our other trading partners, and I am hopeful that going forward Japan will take a similar approach."



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## **Briefly . . .**

FSIS Holds Technical Meeting on Updated Risk Model for BSE: FSIS hosted a technical meeting on the Harvard Risk Assessment of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in the U.S. on July 25. The meeting updated food safety agencies and the public on the scientific measures of BSE risk. The agency requested an updated risk assessment model from the university to evaluate the impact of measures implemented after the December 2003 discovery of a BSE-positive cow in Washington State, and recommendations made by an international BSE panel. The updated risk assessment found that measures enacted by USDA after the 2003 BSE case reduced the potential of human exposure to BSE. The model shows that USDA's ban on non-ambulatory cattle in the human food supply reduces potential exposure by 3%; prohibition of advanced meat recovery on animals more than 30 months old reduces exposure by about 40%; and removing specified risk materials from animals more than 30 months of age nearly eliminates potential human exposure. The updated risk assessment model and report, along with public comments, are available on FSIS' website at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Risk\\_Assessments/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Risk_Assessments/index.asp). For a detailed summary of the meeting by SMA legal counsel Olsson, Frank, and Weeda, P.C., please email Phyllis at [sma@tca.net](mailto:sma@tca.net).

Food Safety Net Services Honored by FSIS: SMA member Food Safety Net Services, Ltd. (FSNS) was recently named the "Woman-Owned Small Business Contractor of the Year 2006" by the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service. FSNS continues to support USDA-FSIS in the generation of microbial baseline data for raw ground beef components (RGBC). The data generated from this baseline study will provide current information on the overall levels of key microorganisms for RGBC that are of a public health concern. Dr. Shanna Boleman, Vice President of Technical Sales, traveled to Washington D.C. in mid-June to attend the ceremony and to accept the award on behalf of Food Safety Net Services and owner, Gina Bellinger. Congratulations to Gina and her staff!

FSIS Amends Revised Directive 5000.1: FSIS recently issued an amendment to Directive 5000.1, Revision 2, Verifying an Establishment's Food Safety System, to include Appendix A, "Slaughter Process Verification Methodology" and Appendix B, "Completing Form 5400-4, When More Than One Inspector Performs Sanitations ISP Procedures in Large Establishments." The amended directive and appendices are available online at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/5000.1\\_Rev2\\_A1.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/5000.1_Rev2_A1.pdf). The appendices were inadvertently omitted in the June 1, 2006 revision and this amendment also corrects three typographical errors in the document.

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