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Email: sma@tca.net
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Edited by Phyllis Zimmerman

FSIS Proposes Rule to List Retailers Affected by Recalls

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) today announced a proposed rule which would make public lists of retail outlets that have received products that have been recalled. "We believe that publishing a list of retail establishments that have received products subject to recall will help consumers more easily determine if they purchased recalled product," said USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond. "FSIS currently posts detailed information about recalled products, including pictures when possible, on its website to help consumers identify products subject to recall." In 2005, there were 53 recalls involving meat and poultry products, compared with 113 in 2002. When a recall is conducted, FSIS posts a recall press release on its website to help consumers identify the product. The Agency also distributes the press release to media in those states where the product has been distributed as well as electronically to mailing lists maintained by FSIS. Federal, state and local health and agricultural officials are also alerted to the fact that a recall is taking place. The recall release includes the name of the recalling establishment, the reason for the recall, a description of the food being recalled, any identifying codes, the recall classification and the appropriate contact persons for FSIS and the company involved. During the recall process, FSIS receives lists of consignees from the recalling firm and contacts consignees at all levels of distribution to ensure that proper notification is taking place and that products subject to recall are being removed from commerce, properly disposed of, or returned to the recalling firm. If a product has been distributed to the retail level, under the proposed rule, FSIS will post a complete list of retail outlets on its website once that list has been verified for accuracy. In 2002, FSIS entered into a series of Memoranda of Understanding to allow states to participate in the recall verification process. While consignee identities and distribution lists have in the past been considered confidential business information, FSIS has concluded that it has the authority to release the names of retail consignees of recalled meat and poultry products and that doing so will enhance the effectiveness of the recall process. Comments may be submitted on or before May 5, 2006 to: Docket Clerk, USDA, FSIS, 300 12th Street, S.W., Room 102 Cotton Annex, Washington, D.C. 20250; or through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. The proposed rule is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FRPubs/04-006P.pdf.

Sweden Confirms First Case of BSE

Sweden's first case of mad cow disease was confirmed by the European Union's central laboratory last week. The infected animal was a 12-year old cow, which was culled for destruction due to a history of milking fever. In line with EU legislation requiring all fallen stock to be checked for BSE, the cow was tested in the rendering plant. As a result of this BSE case, the Commission will now reconsider Sweden's exemption from the requirement to test all bovine animals intended for human consumption, laid down in the TSE Regulation, which applies in all other EU Member States. Designated Geographical BSE-Risk level 2, Sweden had special dispensation from the EU rule requiring every bovine animal slaughtered for the food chain to be tested. Instead, around 10 000 healthy slaughtered bovine animals have been randomly tested every year in Sweden up to this point. Investigation into the possible source of contamination of the infected cow is ongoing. All the offspring and cohorts of the infected cow are being traced and culled, and no meat or products from animals linked to the cow will enter the food or feed chain. Sweden applies all of the mandatory EU animal health measures against BSE, including the removal of specified risk material from all animals entering the food chain, which are designed to ensure maximum protection of public health.

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FSIS Issues Export-Related Directives and Notices

As a part of FSIS' mission to protect public health, inspection program personnel learn about requirements necessary for exporting products to other countries. Export-related directives and notices are published to provide urgent export information to FSIS officials certifying meat and poultry products for export. The following export-related directives and notices were published during the week of February 27:

- Directive 9000.1 (PDF Only), Export Certification, was re-issued to provide a clear set of standards for district offices and inspection program personnel concerning current agency policy regarding the export certification process. The directive also clarifies the purpose of the export library and other aspects of the directive.
- Directive 9040.1 (PDF Only), Re-Inspection of Product Intended for Export, was re-issued provide instructions for the examination of boxes or containers in situations where inspection program personnel have a reason to question whether the product as labeled meets the importing country's requirements.
- Notice 9-06, Certifying Beef Products under Export Verification Programs, was issued to provide FSIS personnel with new instructions related to the FSIS certification process for meat products exported under export verification (EV) programs.
- Notice 10-06, Certifying Beef Products to be Exported to Japan for U.S. Military Use, was issued to provide FSIS personnel with information regarding the certification of beef and beef products for Japan for U.S. military use. To view the directives and notices, visit FSIS' website at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/regulations_directives_&_notices/.

McDonald Retires from TCFA

Richard McDonald, longtime president and CEO of the Texas Cattle Feeders Association, is retiring after a 32-year career with TCFA. McDonald joined the TCFA staff in 1974 as executive director and in 1988 was appointed as the chief executive of the association. McDonald graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in animal science and earned a master's degree and Ph.D. from Louisiana State University. "It is almost impossible to define the positive impact that Richard has had, not just on TCFA and its members, but on the entire beef industry," said John Gillcrist, TCFA chairman. "He has been a steady, consistent and hard-working leader for cattle feeders and his influence and imprint on the cattle industry will remain for years." Among his many victories on behalf of cattle feeders over the years, McDonald was instrumental in helping pass a number of tax-relief measures for cattlemen, obtaining clear title and prompt payment legislation for ag producers and has worked closely with other beef organizations to develop coalitions to obtain important legislative victories in Austin and Washington D.C. "Perhaps more than anything else, however," Gillcrist said, "Richard will be remembered for his ability to analyze an issue and see not only its immediate ramifications, but its long-term potential to affect cattlemen. TCFA's policy positions and many of our legislative and industry triumphs resulted from Richard's leadership, guidance and unerring understanding of issues." Ross Wilson, a 21-year veteran of TCFA, has been named president and CEO. Wilson is only the fourth person to hold the top executive position at TCFA. He joined TCFA in 1985 as government affairs director and in 1998 was named vice president. During Wilson's career at TCFA, he has been the association's point person on state and national legislative and regulatory issues for cattle feeders. "Ross Wilson is well known in both Austin and Washington D.C. as one of the top lobbyists in the business," said Gillcrist. "He is highly respected by elected leaders and regulatory agency staff alike because he shoots straight and represents cattle feeders with an intensity and dedication that stands above the crowd." Wilson assumes his duties March 1, 2006. (*Cattlenetwork.com, 2/28/06*)

Welcome, New Member!

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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

Briefly . . .

FSIS Issues Instructions for Ante-Mortem Horse Inspection: Last week the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued Notice 13-06, "Instructions for Ante-Mortem Inspection of Horses as a Voluntary Reimbursable Service." The Notice provides instructions to inspection program personnel on the performance of ante-mortem inspection of horses as a voluntary, reimbursable service. The actual inspection activities to be performed have not changed. The Notice is scheduled to be implemented March 10, 2006. The notice is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Notice_13-06/index.asp.

Poland, Sweden Confirm Bird Flu: Sweden and Poland have become the ninth and tenth European Union countries to discover the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (H5N1) within their borders. Poland confirmed today that two dead swans had the virulent H5N1 virus and a few days ago Swedish authorities informed the European Commission of two confirmed cases in dead wild ducks south of Stockholm. In Austria, a cat has also tested positive for the disease. Animals carrying H5N1 without showing any signs of ill health could make it harder to detect and contain bird flu. Authorities say the longer the virus remains in a mammal, the greater the risk of it mutating into a more dangerous form. The rapid spread of the virus has already dealt a heavy blow to Europe's poultry industry and heightened fears for human health.

FSIS Plans Intensified Listeria Testing: *Meatingplace.com* reports that USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service plans to perform "intensified verification testing" for *Listeria monocytogenes* at some 200 U.S. plants over the next year, according to FSIS Deputy Assistant Administrator of Field Operations Kenneth Peterson. The "not-for-cause" testing, which will involve product, product-contact, and environmental swabs, will begin in mid-April, and involve about four plants per week, Peterson said, speaking at the National Meat Association's 60th Annual Convention last week in San Francisco. Peterson said that establishments will be given one to two weeks notice prior to testing, and that tests will be accompanied by a food safety assessment. Some, but not all, establishments will be selected on the basis of risk, he added. (*John Gregerson, Meatingplace.com, 3/6/06*)

Pork Board Acquires "Pork. The Other White Meat" Trademark: The National Pork Board announced Friday that it has agreed to terms to acquire ownership of the "Pork. The Other White Meat" trademark from the National Pork Producers Council. The National Pork Board has been licensing the rights to use the popular trademark, which was created by the NPPC in 1985, prior to the formation of the National Pork Board and the creation of the national Pork Checkoff in 1986. "Purchase of 'Pork. The Other White Meat' is a better option for the National Pork Board than building a new brand," said National Pork Board President Danita Rodibaugh. "We believe building a new brand to the same recognition level would take a minimum of seven years and cost more than the terms of this agreement. There also is no guarantee that a new brand would reach the 90 percent awareness among consumers achieved by 'Pork. The Other White Meat'."

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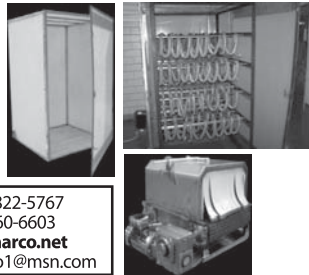
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