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S. Korea Resumes U.S. Beef Imports

After a review of U.S. beef safety systems and protocols, the Korean government announced the resumption of U.S. beef import eligibility. Last Friday S. Korea announced that it would resume the importation of U.S. boneless beef from cattle less than 30 months of age. "We believe that the last two years and nine months was a valuable period for us to complement and reinforce our safety system to further minimize the BSE risk and to ensure Korean consumers are supplied wholesome and safe beef. The U.S. has strict safety measures in every producing process to ensure the greatest safety," said U.S. Meat Export Federation President and CEO, Philip M. Seng. The S. Korean Agriculture Ministry said 36 U.S. slaughterhouses designated to handle meat for export to South Korea have met required safety measures. "Trade resumption in boneless beef is the first step in normalizing trade of beef and beef products with Korea. We look forward to expanding our access to the Korean market and other export markets to achieve trade that is consistent with international guidelines," said U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns. "We are mindful that significant technical issues exist that must be resolved. We will continue to work with Korea to address these matters in the coming days," he added.

House Passes Horse Slaughter Ban

Moved by sappy appeals to "protect the noble horse," the U.S. House of Representatives voted last Thursday to ban the slaughter of horses in the United States. Lawmakers passed H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, 263-146 over the opposition of farm, veterinary, and meat industry groups, as well as the U.S. Agriculture Department. Opponents said the bill was a soft-headed idea that ignored the realities of dealing with unwanted horses and removed important management options for livestock owners. There are only three remaining packing plants, two in Texas and one in Illinois, that slaughter horses. The meat is exported for food in Europe and Asia and sold to zoos. Last year Congress cut off funding for USDA inspection of horse slaughter, and plants were forced to pay for federal inspectors to remain in business. About 90,000 horses a year are sent to packing plants. "They (proponents) are arguing about what happens to the meat" but not assuring horse welfare, said House Agriculture Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA). If owners cannot sell unwanted horses, said Goodlatte, they will be abandoned or "put down" in a pasture or behind a barn, possibly by haphazard methods. An amendment to postpone the ban until programs for unwanted horses were in place also failed. It could cost more than \$50 million a year if the government took care of them, said the Congressional Budget Office. Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton (R-TX), said the bill was "an outright attack on animal agriculture." The cattle group R-CALF USA said the bill interfered with the rights of horse owners. "We don't need another layer of federal bureaucracy to intrude on our daily business decisions," said R-CALF President Chuck Kiker. Lobbyists for horsepackers said the bill would set a precedent for meddling in veal calf, hog and poultry barn and poultry slaughter operations. So far, the Senate has not acted on a similar bill, but it is not too early to contact your Senators and ask them to oppose this or similar legislation. While President George W. Bush's administration has opposed the measure, a veto would be unlikely. In late October 2005, Senator John Ensign (R-NV) introduced S. 1915, companion legislation to H.R. 503. As of September 8, this Senate bill had 22 co-sponsors. With the overwhelming adoption of H.R. 503 in the House, the Senate has already received the bill approved in the House. SMA urges everyone to contact their Senators to oppose this legislation. For talking points and suggestions, email Phyllis at sma@tca.net.

S O U T H W E S T M E A T A S S O C I A T I O N

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FSIS: Check Eligibility to Export to Destination Countries

Each week, the Food Safety and Inspection Service offers an exporting tip in its published *Constituent Update*. Last Friday's tip reminded inspection officials that before issuing FSIS Form 9060-5, Meat and Poultry Export Certificate of Wholesomeness, they should check to make sure the plant is eligible to export meat and/or poultry products to the country of destination. There are approximately 12 countries that maintain an approved plant list for imports of meat and/or poultry products from the United States, including Australia, Mexico and Russia. Some of these countries import meat products from over 1,000 plants and some from as few as five. Plants may apply to be included on an approved plant list for most of these countries, but it is also important to check the country requirements for any additional information regarding the procedures that should be followed in making the application to be included on an approved plant list for the importing country. It is the plant's responsibility to check a country's approved plant list and to file an application to be included on the list for that particular country. However, it is the obligation of the FSIS inspector signing the health certificate to verify that the plant is eligible to export product to the country of destination prior to signing the health certificate. For further information, call FSIS' Office of International Affairs at (202) 720-3473. The Library of Export Requirements has been updated to reflect changes in export requirements for Japan and Mexico. Complete information can be found at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/index.asp.

USDA Delays Implementation of CWD Rule

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service delayed implementation of a final rule published July 21, that establishes regulations for a chronic wasting disease (CWD) herd certification program to help eliminate the disease from farmed and captive cervids in the United States. The final rule entitled: Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program and Interstate Movement of Farmed or Captive Deer, Elk and Moose originally had an effective date of October 19. Recently, however, APHIS received petitions from several organizations representing various state agencies requesting a delay in the effective date of the CWD rule and reconsideration of several requirements. The Agency is currently evaluating the merits of these petitions and will publish a notice in the *Federal Register* in the near future making the contents of the petitions available to the public for comment. The final rule establishes a voluntary certification program for owners of deer, elk and moose herds who chose to participate and follow requirements for animal identification, testing, herd management and movement of animals into and from herds. The final rule also contains new requirements regarding the interstate movement of farmed cervids to prevent the spread of CWD.

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Mark Your Calendars for Upcoming SMA Events

Sept 12-14 Developing and Implementing HACCP Plans for the Meat Industry - Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

October 6-8 Annual SMA Dove Hunt - Janecka Ranch, Waelder, TX

Nov 30 - Dec 1 Beyond Basics: HACCP Plan Improvement Workshop - Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

Dec 12-14 Developing and Implementing HACCP Plans for the Meat Industry - Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

Jan 9-11 Processed Meats Clinic - Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

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, November 30 - December 1, 2006 at TAMU's Kleberg Center in College Station, Texas. 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 the SMA web site, or by contacting the SMA office.

Sign up today!

Briefly . . .

FSIS Amends Food Defense Verification Procedures: Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Directive 5420.1, Revision 3, “Homeland Security Threat Condition Response - Food Defense Verification Procedures,” was amended by the FSIS last week. The directive details the emergency food defense verification procedures that inspection program personnel are to follow with the Department of Homeland Security declares a threat condition yellow, orange or red. The revised directive goes into effect on September 15, 2006. To review the updated directive, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/5420.1Rev3Amend1.pdf.

FSIS to Hold Regulatory Education Sessions for Small, Very Small Plants: FSIS will hold regulatory education sessions for the owners and operators of small and very small plants in Wisconsin, Texas, New York, Missouri and California. The sessions will cover a regulatory walk-through of the sanitation standard operating procedures, hazard analysis and critical control point and rules of practice regulations. The regulatory education session in Texas will be held September 18, from 6:30 - 8:30 PM, at the MCC Building Auditorium, University of Texas, 3935 West Braker Lane (on the southwest corner of MOPac [Loop 1] and Braker Lane), Austin, Texas. To register by phone, call 800-336-3747. Online registration forms and information about upcoming sessions can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Outreach_Sessions_SVS_Plants/index.asp.

Legislation Would Keep Animal ID Voluntary: Last Thursday U.S. Senator Jim Talent (R-MO) introduced legislation to prohibit development of a mandatory federal system to track livestock and to keep the system voluntary. U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) introduced companion legislation in the House. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's program, officially dubbed the National Animal Identification System, or NAIS, wants to give health officials a means to more quickly identify livestock and farms that might have contact with a disease. The Talent-Emerson bill would prohibit the USDA from mandating livestock owner participation in a NAIS and ensure that confidential records submitted to USDA by livestock owners would not be subject to any request under the Freedom of Information Act and could only be shared with other departments under specific circumstances.

Cranberry Juice Compounds Can Alter Bacteria: Compounds in cranberry juice have the ability to change *E. coli* bacteria, a class of microorganisms responsible for a host of human illnesses, in ways that render them unable to initiate an infection. The results of this new research by scientists at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) suggest that the cranberry may provide an alternative to antibiotics, particularly for combating *E. coli* bacteria that have become resistant to conventional treatment. The new findings, which were presented September 10 at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society in San Francisco, for the first time begin to paint a detailed picture of the biochemical mechanisms that may underlie a number of beneficial health effects of cranberry juice that have been reported in other studies over the years.

FDA Reports on Food Allergen Cross-Contact: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition has posted a report in response to the directive to the Secretary of Health and Human Services in section 204 of the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004. The report addresses multiple issues relating to cross-contact with food allergens during food manufacture and distribution and the use of, and consumer preferences about, advisory labeling. The report is available at: www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/algrep.pdf.