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## Fact Sheets

## Production &amp; Inspection

## BSE Rules Being Strictly Enforced

A review of inspection data by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) shows strong enforcement of regulations to further enhance safeguards against Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). These regulatory actions protect the American consumer by preventing prohibited materials from entering the human food supply.

- FSIS inspection program personnel are assigned to every federally inspected meat, poultry and egg products plant in America. These plants cannot legally operate without Federal inspection. FSIS conducts ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection on 34 million head of cattle slaughtered annually in federally inspected plants.
- FSIS inspection program personnel use Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (PR/HACCP) regulations to verify that written procedures for the removal, segregation and disposition of Specified Risk Materials (SRM) are effectively designed and executed. This is consistent with all food safety verification activities completed by FSIS inspection program personnel, such as the cooking and chilling of products. FSIS has a broad range of enforcement authorities under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and PR/HACCP regulations.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the science based policies and effective enforcement strategies contained in HACCP are protecting public health by making meat, poultry and egg products safer. In its report on the incidence of infection with pathogens transmitted commonly through foods released in 2005, the CDC noted significant declines from the 1996-98 baseline in illnesses caused by *E. coli* O157 (42%), *Listeria monocytogenes* (40%), *Campylobacter* (31%) and *Yersinia* (45%). Overall, *Salmonella* illnesses have fallen by 8%. Dramatic multi-year reductions in illnesses from *E. coli* O157 means the U.S. is now below the Healthy People 2010 goal of 1.0 case per 100,000 persons.
- In addition to ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections of all cattle, FSIS continually conducts verification procedures to ensure that the food safety systems in federally inspected plants are operating according to Federal law. An inspection procedure can consist of many different activities that indicate whether food safety plans are being followed and critical elements necessary to ensure food safety are being accomplished.
- The Agency analyzed results of 8.8 million inspection verification procedures performed from January 2004 to May 2005 in about 6,000 federally-inspected meat and poultry establishments. If inspection program personnel note during a procedure that a plant is not in compliance with Federal regulations, a Noncompliance Record (NR) will be issued. An NR is the first step in the enforcement process.
- Of the total number of NRs issued during this period, 1036 procedures were determined to be noncompliant with the regulations related to Specified Risk Materials (SRMs). This represents less than one percent of the total number of NRs written from January 2004 through May 2005 for beef slaughter and processing plants.
- When regulatory violations occur, FSIS verifies the product is made safe for consumption or condemned and that insanitary food production practices have been corrected. These actions protect the American consumer by preventing adulterated or unfit products from entering the human food supply.

These data demonstrate inspection program personnel took immediate action when they determined that regulations were not being strictly followed. The analysis demonstrates public health was protected. The number of enforcement actions associated with these non-compliant findings is a testament to the skill and conscientiousness of 8,000 highly trained inspection program personnel who are assigned to every plant in America and who examine each live animal and each carcass to ensure that the U.S. food supply remains the safest in the world.

On January 12, 2004, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) published

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new rules enhancing its BSE safeguards in order to minimize exposure to BSE infective tissues and better protect public health. These measures included:

- Banning from the human food supply all tissues that science tells us could be infective in a cow with the disease. These are called specified risk materials (SRMs) and include the skull, brain, trigeminal ganglia, eyes, portions of the vertebral column, spinal cord and dorsal root ganglia of cattle aged 30 months or older, and the tonsils and the distal ileum, (a part of the small intestine) of all cattle.
- Strict process controls for establishments using advanced meat recovery (AMR) systems for cattle younger than 30 months of age since SRMs are prohibited from use in AMR systems;
- Banning non-ambulatory cattle from entering the human food supply;
- Holding the carcass of any animal chosen for testing out of the food supply until the test is confirmed negative and;
- The prohibition of air-injection stunning of cattle.

Public Health Veterinarians perform or verify ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection on every animal. These highly educated and trained FSIS veterinarians, along with formally trained Consumer Safety Inspectors, are specifically assigned the responsibility for verification of the development, implementation and maintenance of plant control procedures for the removal, segregation, and disposition of SRMs.

Since BSE regulations were issued, FSIS has implemented a number of programs to train its inspection program personnel and help plants comply with new requirements. FSIS has issued 12 notices to its inspection program personnel detailing specific aspects of the regulations, including BSE surveillance activities in cooperation with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). In 2004, FSIS held five teaching workshops around the country to help primarily small and very small plants understand the regulations and help ensure compliance. As part of a continuing outreach effort to small and very small plants, FSIS produced workshop training materials, which remain available on the FSIS Web site. Additionally, FSIS developed a training CD and accompanying materials called "The ABC's of BSE," which were released as part of FSIS distance learning program.

FSIS is confident it is successfully carrying out its mission to protect public health by strictly enforcing safeguards designed to protect Americans from BSE. FSIS will continuously evaluate its policies and procedures to ensure they remain the strongest they can be.

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