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## In the News . . .

### Deadline Extended for Comments on Foreign Poultry Plant Inspections

USDA approved the British poultry inspection system, allowing products from Great Britain to be sold here.

The decision, which comes at a time when U.S. export markets are expanding, is expected to further open trade between the two countries. Currently, 15 U.S. plants are approved to sell poultry in Britain.

USDA prohibits the importation of meat and poultry that fails to comply with domestic inspection rules. Before a foreign country can export such products to the United States, USDA must review and approve that nation's inspection system. The products are then reinspected on a sample basis when they arrive here.

Until now, only Canada, France, Hong Kong, and Israel were allowed to export poultry to the United States.

USDA is also considering a proposal that would require foreign countries to set up a residue testing and sampling program if they want to export poultry to the United States.

For further information contact Dr. William Havlik, Director, Foreign Programs Division, Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, Washington DC 20250.

### USDA Revises Grain Standards

USDA revised its grain standards to improve the accuracy and uniformity of graded grains.

The changes incorporate common and familiar terms and update the 11 grain standards to conform with current trading practices.

For example, the special grades "Tough, Stained, Bleached, and Bright" have been



A USDA proposal could require more accurate weight measurements for chicken parts.

eliminated from the barley standards. Sample, grade, damaged kernels, and classes of malting barley have also been redefined, and black barley is no longer a grade determinant.

The revisions, which went into effect June 30, simplify the language of the standards, said Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) Administrator W. Kirk Miller.

In addition, FGIS amended its regulations on dockage foreign material, and dust as of July 30. The service also set new insect infestation limits for grain. These become effective May 1, 1988.

For more information, contact Lewis Lebakken, Jr., FGIS, USDA, Room 1661-S, Washington, DC 20250.

### Greater Weight Precision Proposed

A new USDA proposal could require that certain meat and poultry products packaged under Federal inspection be labeled with more accurate weight measurements.

The proposal, which would apply only to variable weight packages, such as chicken parts or sliced pastrami, calls for weights to be expressed beyond the current two-decimal limit. It was published in the *Federal Register* July 1.

According to the Food Safety and Inspection Service, this would ensure a fair value for consumers and processors, particularly for high-value, low-weight products.

For more information, contact Dr. William S. Horne, Associate Department

Administrator, Meat and Poultry Inspection Operations, (202) 447-5190.

#### **Iron Source Identified in Soybean Hulls**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has identified an easily digested form of iron in fiber-rich soybean hulls.

Soybean hulls are a good source of dietary iron, but until this discovery, the reason why was unknown. According to Joseph Laslow, a biochemist for USDA's Agricultural Research Service, the recently identified source is Iron II, a readily digestible form of the nutrient.

Most of the iron in high fiber plants, such as soybeans, is Iron III. This form of iron combines with the fiber in the plant and is difficult for humans to absorb.

Laslow, who conducted the research at USDA's Northern Research Center in Peoria, Illinois, says the Iron II discovery could lead to using soybean hulls to fortify breads and other baked goods with more iron and fiber.

For more information, contact Joseph Laslow, Physical Chemistry, Northern Research Center, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, Peoria, IL 61604.

#### **Tougher Rules Proposed for Disposing of Contaminated Carcasses.**

A recently proposed USDA rule would require that meat originally intended for human consumption be destroyed if it contains biological residues.

The proposal is aimed at keeping these contaminants from re-entering the food

chain. Presently, such carcasses can be used in animal feeds if the biological residues are removed.

The proposal requires that contaminated carcasses be buried or incinerated under the supervision of a USDA official.

For additional information, contact Dr. Douglas L. Berndt, Director, Slaughter Inspection Standards and Procedures Division, Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, Washington, DC 20250.

#### **USDA Allows Importation of Certain Italian Hams.**

USDA is allowing certain uncooked hams, previously denied entry, to be imported to this country.

The ruling affects imports of prosciutto hams. These hams are salt-cured and aged for more than a year. Prosciutto imports were banned because of concerns about the introduction of foreign animal diseases. USDA changed its regulations to allow for the importation of hams aged a minimum of 400 days after research showed that the viruses of concern cannot survive this length of processing.

Currently, Federal rules require the inspection and approval of foreign plants before they can begin processing uncooked hams for export to the United States. Only meat from hogs that are free of specified diseases can be used.

For more information, contact Dr. Richard Bowen (301) 436-5953.

#### **Implementation of Food Stamp Program Is Sound**

According to a recent report released by USDA, the system used to monitor the Food Stamp Program is basically sound.

The study, done at the request of Congress, analyzes the quality control system of the Food Stamp Program.

States annually issue \$11 billion of federally funded food stamps to 35 million people. The system checks the eligibility requirements and benefit certification used by States in determining who receives food aid.

Congress requested the study to evaluate the system's usefulness to States. The study was also designed to determine whether States should pay for a portion of the benefits that were improperly issued. Currently, USDA penalizes States that over-issue benefits by more than 5 percent of their entire Food Stamp Program. In 1985, States overissued \$900 million and underissued \$250 million food stamps.

"It is crucial that certifications are accurate and overpayments be minimized," said John Bode, Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services.

"Every recipient should receive the correct benefit. That way, both recipients and the American taxpayers get a fair deal," he added.

Copies of the "Food Stamp Program Quality Control System," are available from the Office of Analysis and Evaluation, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22301. □