



Meat Messenger

North Dakota State Meat and Poultry Inspection Program

2010 Quarter 1

Guidelines for Humane Handling

Humane handling of animals is a very important responsibility for slaughter establishment owners and employees. A better understanding of the requirements for handling and slaughtering livestock keeps suffering of animals to a minimum, and results in improved conditions for employees. This in turn results in a better product. The following information is from an USDA-FSIS guidebook based on state and federal policies that implement the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978 in livestock slaughter establishments. The North Dakota Meat and Poultry Inspection Program has adopted the federal regulations pertaining to humane slaughter and uses FSIS Directive 6900.2 Riv. 1 for guidance in enforcing these regulations.

- **Livestock pens, driveways and ramps:** All areas in which animals are kept or moved must be free of sharp protruding objects, loose or broken boards, broken metal piping or latches, wire or unnecessary openings. These areas should be properly lit. These areas must also be arranged that sharp corners and direction reversal of driven animals are minimized and must not cause injury or unnecessary excitement during movement. Animals should be unloaded from vehicles without injury, and with minimum excitement or discomfort.
- **Distractions:** Reflections, dripping water, shadows and air blowing dry debris can be distracting and cause animals to balk.
- **Slips and falls:** Floors of holding areas must be slip-resistant.
- **Inclement weather:** Establishments must provide adequate shelter for all animals. Animals deemed suspect must be kept in separate, covered pens.
- **Water and feed:** Animals must have access to water in all holding pens and, if held longer than 24 hours, access to feed. Animals held overnight must have sufficient room to lie down.
- **Handling of animals:** Electric prods, canvas slappers or other implements for driving animals shall be used as little as possible to minimize excitement and injury. Animals must not be forced to move faster than normal walking speed. Proper use of tools by adequately trained employees will minimize animal balking due to distraction or other issues. Disabled livestock must be humanely handled and separated from normal ambulatory animals and kept in covered pens.
- **Stunning Methods:** Failure to properly stun animals is a serious violation of the law. Proper stunned animals feel no pain, are rendered instantly unconscious and remain unconscious until slaughtered. Signs of proper stunning include a straight back and floppy head, absence of righting reflex, tongue is hanging out (not curled), and absolutely no vocalization.



Establishments are responsible for evaluating and assessing their facilities and their employees' handling of livestock. Remember: good management practices always benefit your business!

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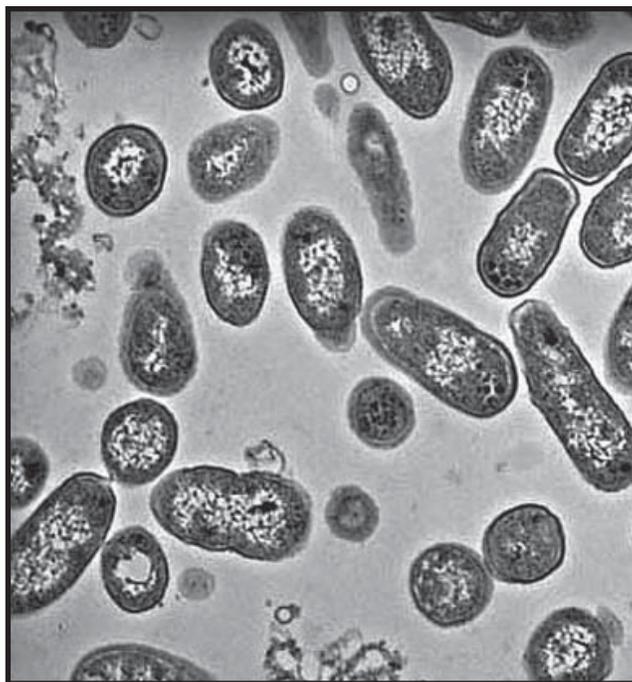
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Know Your Bacteria (Part 2 of a 4 part series)

Julie Nilges

Last quarter, we discussed E.coli bacteria. Next, we are going to take a look at another bacterium everyone has heard of – salmonella. A single-celled organism, salmonella is the most common cause of food poisoning in the U.S. Since salmonella was first discovered in 1885, scientists have identified more than 2,300 serotypes, although only a few strains cause disease in humans.

Salmonella can be transferred from animals to humans to the environment and back again in a process known as zoonosis. Raw or undercooked foods, such as meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, some vegetables and fresh fruit, are potential sources, along with soil, untreated water, insects and feces. Contact with animals, especially chicks and reptiles, can expose a person to salmonella.



Illness only comes after ingesting salmonella. An incubation period of 1 to 3 days, followed by symptoms of diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps and vomiting lasting 4-7 days can be expected. Although healthy humans may not require treatment, salmonella can seriously affect weakened adults and infants. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), salmonellosis causes about 1.4 million cases of food-borne illness and more than 500 deaths each year in the U.S.

Because salmonella can live for weeks outside a living host, and has been found in dried feces after 2.5 years and after several months in water, aseptic precautions should be followed. Freezing will not kill salmonella bacteria. Only thorough cooking to appropriate internal temperatures will render the bacteria harmless.

More information can be found at fsis.usda.gov under Fact Sheets and www.cdc.gov/.

Tips and Pitfalls in Designing a Food Label

Your company has a great idea for a new product, the formulation is being tweaked and you want to start production as soon as possible. Before all this begins, you must have an accurate, approved label.

All meat and poultry products offered for sale must bear a label that includes all mandatory features. Specific requirements depend on the type of meat processing business. Retail- exempt establishments must abide by ND Department of Health (NDDH) regulations. State and federally inspected establishments are covered by USDA-FSIS regulations. The following information from an FSIS article and is a good start to reviewing the necessary steps to getting that good label started.

- Begin label design with the labeling features required by FSIS or NDDH regulations. Deviation from these requirements may result in non-compliance.
- Make sure the placement and prominence requirements for each mandatory feature of the food label are met.
- Review brand names, marketing copy and all other information presented on the label to determine if regulated terms are included.
- Make sure that foods subject to a standard of identity comply with the applicable NDDH/FSIS requirement.
- Make sure that ingredients/components are properly declared in the ingredients statement.
- New or innovative products may trigger unusual labeling issues that will require additional time for review and approval. State-inspected plants should submit these labels to their assigned inspector, but be sure to allow for additional time. FSIS has instructed federal plants that they should not be submitted for evaluation by FSIS staff as part of the sketch-approval process. Instead, they should be addressed through direct contact with the staff. Plants should anticipate and schedule the time necessary to allow for agency consideration of policy issues.
- Review ingredients statement for accuracy and completeness against formulation information. Fully consult ingredient suppliers to obtain all pertinent information as part of this review.
- Keep labeling files complete and current. Document generic approvals and permitted modifications along with final approvals that must be retained by the firm.
- Federally inspected plants should be aware that if they make products that are not amenable and thus not subject to FSIS inspection, they must still comply with applicable labeling rules.
- Fully consult the resources available at the ND Department of Agriculture, NDDA and FSIS websites and always consult the regulations pertaining to your establishment.
- If a label is inaccurate, it should not be used unless a temporary approval is obtained.



More information and assistance can be found at the following websites:

- www.agdepartment.com/Programs/Livestock/Meat%20Inspection.html
- www.ndhealth.gov/FoodLodging/PDF/North%20Dakota%20Food%20Code%202003.pdf
- www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Labeling_Requirements_Guide.pdf

And please ask questions to your in-plant inspector regarding the development of your label.

WANTED: SHEEP HEADS REWARD AVAILABLE

The North Dakota State Board of Animal Health and USDA/APHIS Veterinary Services are paying plants for the heads from mature sheep (14 months or older) that can be submitted for scrapie surveillance, as part of the National Scrapie Eradication Program. All sheep must be traceable by either a USDA-issued scrapie ear tag or proof of ownership.

The following sheep are eligible:

- Any blackfaced sheep over 14 months of age
- Any Southdown or Montadale sheep over 14 months of age
- Any other sheep between 2 and 5 years of age

Plants will receive \$20 for the first head and \$10 for each additional head in each shipment. Heads must be fresh. If testable samples cannot be obtained, payment will not be issued. APHIS staff will pick up the heads at the plants. Contact Misty Sabbe at the Bismarck USDA/APHIS Veterinary Services office at 701-250-4210 or Dr. Beth Carlson at the State Board of Animal Health at 701-328-2655 for more information.

