

April 5, 1999

Thomas Billy  
Administrator  
Food Safety and Inspection Service  
Room 331-E Jamie L. Whitten Building  
14<sup>th</sup> & Independence Avenue  
Washington DC, 20250

Dear Mr. Billy:

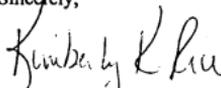
During the March 8, 1999 Public Meeting on Beef Products Contaminated with *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 (*E. coli* O157:H7 or the pathogen), the industry coalition agreed to submit a pilot test protocol that would provide FSIS with information to support the coalition's recommendations for changes to Directive 10,010.1, *Microbiological Testing Program for Escherichia coli O157:H7 in Raw Ground Beef*. A copy of that protocol is attached hereto.

This pilot test must be considered in the context of broader research approach industry is planning regarding *E. coli* O157:H7. Several projects have been developed to help the industry find a solution to the *E. coli* O157:H7 problem. Those projects include developing rapid methods for detection of the pathogen in raw beef products, developing optimum carcass and hide sampling methods to test for *E. coli* O157:H7, determining the incidence and ecology of *E. coli* O157:H7 on cattle entering slaughter facilities to determine the effect on carcass contamination, and developing treatment methods to reduce the pathogen's incidence in live animals.

The attached protocol is only one piece of this global research approach and it does not answer all the questions involving the pathogen. The protocol, however, will enable FSIS and the industry to establish a system to verify routinely slaughter plant interventions used to control *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination on carcasses and to define a

reliable means for reducing the risk of *E. coli* O157:H7 in beef. We look forward to discussing the protocol and next steps in this process with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly K. Rice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "K" at the beginning.

Kimberly K. Rice

*Attachment*