

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

Update on National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF)

- On August 24-27th, 2004 the following NACMCF subcommittees met in Washington, DC :
 - Microbiological Performance Standards for Ground Chicken & Ground Turkey
 - Scientific Criteria for Redefining Pasteurization
 - Criteria for Refrigerated Shelf-Life Based on Safety
 - A meeting of the full NACMCF Committee took place on August 27, 2004, and the following documents were adopted as final:
 - Considerations for Establishing Safety-Based Consume-By Date Labels for Refrigerated Ready-to-Eat Foods.
 - Requisite Scientific Parameters for Establishing the Equivalence of Alternative Methods of Pasteurization.
 - Response to the Questions Posed by FSIS Regarding Performance Standards with Particular Reference to Raw Ground Chicken.
 - Response to the Questions Posed by FSIS Regarding Performance Standards with Particular Reference to Raw Ground Turkey
- *See appendix for a summary of these NACMCF documents.**
- On September 5, 2004, the 2002-2004 NACMCF Committee Term ended.
 - NACMCF was re-chartered on September 23, 2004, and work is underway to reconstitute the Committee for the 2004-2006 term. A Federal Register Notice for a call for nominations published on October 22, 2004.

Appendix: Synopsis of NACMCF Documents

Considerations for Establishing Safety-Based Consume-By Date Labels for Refrigerated Ready-to-Eat Foods:

This document discusses important scientific parameters for establishing safety-based use-by dates for refrigerated Ready-To-Eat (RTE) foods. The work reviews the history of the use of date labels, includes a hazard analysis of refrigerated RTE foods, and provides examples of how safety-based date labels (SBDLs) can be formatted and applied.

Listeria monocytogenes is identified as the appropriate SBDL target organism for refrigerated RTE foods that support its growth, because this could have a beneficial public health impact. The work provides information on verification and validation of SBDLs. Consumer and food handler understanding of the use of adequate refrigeration are also important to the success of SBDLs.

Requisite Scientific Parameters for Establishing the Equivalence of Alternative Methods of Pasteurization:

This document provides requisite scientific parameters for establishing the equivalence of alternative methods of pasteurization in response to the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 that calls for a broadening of the definition of pasteurization.

NACMCF developed a definition of “pasteurization” to guide its work. The Committee discusses how pasteurization processes are based on traditional thermal pasteurization, but notes alternative non-thermal processes and combinations of processes and treatments for pathogen reduction can be equally effective.

The work provides guidelines essential to developing safe pasteurization processes. Important considerations for establishing the efficacy and equivalency of alternate pasteurization processes are discussed.

NACMCF points out that research needed to determine the adequacy of pasteurization processes for new technologies is technology dependent. All pasteurization processes need to be validated and verified to ensure critical processing limits are achieved.

In addition to traditional thermal pasteurization, other technologies or processes currently capable of pasteurizing product include ohmic heating, microwave heating, steam and hot water treatments, high pressure processing, ultraviolet radiation, irradiation, pulsed electric field, and chemical treatments. NACMCF provides discussion on some alternate technologies, and the Committee recognizes that as these are employed in commercial practice research is needed to develop label statements that are understood by consumers.

Response to the Questions Posed by FSIS Regarding Performance Standards with Particular Reference to Raw Ground Chicken:

This work defines the general principles, mechanics, and requirements for updating performance standards. Unique and special considerations needed in developing and applying performance standards specific to raw ground chicken are covered, along with incorporating risk assessment, and recommendations on areas of data and research needs. The Committee concludes that a performance standard based on the principles outlined in this document is a valuable and useful tool to define the expected level of control at one or more steps of a process. Furthermore, performance standards provide the flexibility for industry to develop and seek approval for new strategies for improvement. When establishing or revising a performance standard, a risk assessment (quantitative or qualitative), supported by epidemiological data, should be conducted to characterize the link between the product of concern and human illness. The results of the risk assessment will estimate the public health impact of and need for the performance standard.

Response to the Questions Posed by FSIS Regarding Performance Standards with Particular Reference to Raw Ground Turkey:

This work defines the general principles, mechanics, and requirements for updating performance standards. Unique and special considerations needed in developing and applying performance standards specific to raw ground turkey are covered, along with incorporating risk assessment, and recommendations on areas of data and research needs. The Committee concludes that a performance standard based on the principles outlined in this document is a valuable and useful tool to define the expected level of control at one or more steps of a process. Furthermore, performance standards provide the flexibility for industry to develop and seek approval for new strategies for improvement. When establishing or revising a performance standard, a risk assessment (quantitative or qualitative), supported by epidemiological data, should be conducted to characterize the link between the product of concern and human illness. The results of the risk assessment will estimate the public health impact of and need for the performance standard.

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