

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection
January 16 – 17, 2013
Washington, DC

Report from the subcommittee on veal slaughter

Recognizing that pre-harvest practices can impact potential pathogen contamination, the agency should conduct a series of stakeholder meetings to facilitate knowledge sharing and capturing to more fully fill the data gap that exists for this specific class of beef. The committee recognizes the need for pre-harvest interventions and should, in addition to the above stated research plan, ensure discussions with interested stakeholder meetings on this topic. Further, the committee recognizes the potential difference within the veal class and as such should likewise focus efforts at the stakeholder meetings on this topic with intent to capture best practices both in plant and pre-harvest, and to achieve a measureable pathogen reduction by 2014.

Question 1:

What improvements can be made to the existing sanitary dressing verification procedures (FSIS PHIS Directive 6410.1) to address unique aspects of veal slaughter and processing?

- Are there instructions that do not apply to veal slaughter establishments?
- Are there instructions that need to be added to address unique aspects of veal slaughter and processing?
- Should the frequency of sanitary dressing verification be different for veal as compared with beef?

Response:

The subcommittee agrees that the current regulatory requirements applicable to beef slaughter operations are equally applicable for veal slaughter operations. The subcommittee recommends that FSIS revise Directive 6410.1 to include more veal industry specific language so that there is a clear understanding by FSIS In-Plant Personnel (IPP) of its applicability to veal slaughter operations.

The subcommittee does not believe that the frequency of sanitary dressing verification should be different for veal as compared with beef.

Question 2:

What improvements can be made to the draft notice on verifying veal slaughter sanitary dressing to address any additional unique aspects of veal slaughter and processing not currently in the document?

Response:

The subcommittee recognizes the need to modify the draft notice on verifying veal slaughter sanitary dressing to more effectively communicate FSIS regulatory information to small and very small plants and to include more visual aids (i.e. photographs). Additionally the Agency should work within its small plant outreach division to develop appropriate educational and training materials.

The subcommittee recommends that FSIS should seek veal industry expertise on the best practice on sanitary dressing procedures.

The subcommittee also supports increase the sanitary dressing verification frequencies to establish a baseline. After some predetermined timeframe (i.e. 90 days) the Agency should reevaluate the data and determine the need for further modification to the sanitary dressing verification frequencies. The subcommittee recommendation is that the verification frequency may be increased based on establishment specific performance.

Question 3:

What improvements can be made to the 2002 beef slaughter compliance guidance document to address unique aspects of veal slaughter?

- Is there guidance that does not apply to veal slaughter establishments?
- Is there guidance that needs to be added to address unique aspects of veal slaughter?
- Are there other changes to the guidance that are needed in addition to the changes currently under consideration?

Response:

See response to Question 1. Additionally, the Agency should make its necessary changes to the compliance guidance, noting the changes, and incorporate veal specific guidance language. The subcommittee recommends that the Agency then submit the modified compliance guidelines for stakeholder comment and suggestion.

Question 4:

Are there differences in the classes of veal (bob veal, formula fed, non-formula fed, and heavy calf) that impact slaughter and should be pointed out in FSIS policy documents?

Response:

The subcommittee recognizes there are specific challenges that impact slaughter with each veal classification, but the data currently provided by FSIS is insufficient to define risk among the various classes. If FSIS identifies areas within their existing tools where more specific language is needed in the subclasses of veal, the agency should include that language.

The subcommittee recommends that the Agency confer with ARS or other research providers to conduct research into pre-harvest risk factors associated with STEC in veal slaughter. The subcommittee also recommends that the Agency promote research into the development of industry best management practices

As a long term goal, the Agency should address the animal drug residue challenge in bob veal calves.

Question 5:

What innovative strategies can the Agency use to help industry (comprised of small and very small establishments) and FSIS inspection personnel better understand the needs for slaughtering animals used to produce veal products?

Response:

The committee recommends that the Agency work within its small and very small plant outreach division to develop communications targeted to veal slaughter establishments. The material developed should be short and concise where possible. The guidance and tools should include visual materials, plain language (i.e. non-regulatory) guidance documents. FSIS should also develop webinars, DVDs, regional meetings and partnering with state extension services and other appropriate venues to deliver this information.

Recognizing that pre-harvest practices can impact potential pathogen contamination, the agency should conduct a series of stakeholder meetings to facilitate knowledge sharing and capturing to more fully fill the data gap that exists for this specific class of beef. The committee recognizes the need for pre-harvest interventions and should, in addition to the above stated research plan, ensure discussions at multidisciplinary, multiagency stakeholder meetings on this topic. Further, the committee recognizes the potential difference within the veal class and as such should likewise focus efforts at the stakeholder meetings on this topic with intent to capture best practices both in plant and pre-harvest.