



October 7, 2019

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Mr. Michael Welu, Plant Manager
Rantoul Foods, LLC
Est. M35
205 Turner Drive
Rantoul, IL 61866

NOTICE OF INTENDED ENFORCEMENT

Dear Mr. Welu:

This letter confirms verbal notification provided to you by Dr. Tamara Davis, Deputy District Manager, on October 5, 2019, at approximately 1230 hours CDT, of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) intent to withhold the marks of inspection and suspend the assignment of inspection program personnel from your slaughter process at Rantoul Foods, LLC, Establishment M35, located at 205 Turner Drive, in Rantoul, IL. This action is based on your establishment's failure to effectively implement humane methods of slaughtering and handling of animals in a manner that complies with the regulatory requirements prescribed by the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA). Your establishment was observed to be in violation of Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations (9 CFR), Section 313.5(a)(3). The Rules of Practice, 9 CFR 500.3(b), provide that FSIS may impose a suspension without providing prior notification if it is determined that an establishment is handling or slaughtering animals inhumanely.

Background and Authority

The Federal Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 603 Sec. 3 (b)) states, "*for the purpose of preventing the inhumane slaughtering of livestock, the Secretary shall cause to be made, by inspectors appointed for that purpose, an examination and inspection of the method by which cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, or other equines are slaughtered and handled in connection with slaughter in the slaughtering establishments inspected under this Act. The Secretary may refuse to provide inspection to a new slaughtering establishment or may cause inspection to be temporarily suspended at a slaughtering establishment if the Secretary finds that any cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, or other equines have been slaughtered or handled in connection with slaughter at such establishment by any method not in accordance with Sections 1901 to 1906 of Title 7 until the establishment furnishes assurances satisfactory to the Secretary that all slaughtering and handling in connection with slaughter of livestock shall be in accordance with such a method.*" In addition, under prohibited acts 21 U.S.C. 610 sec 10 (b), "*No person, establishment or corporation shall, with the respect to any cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, and other equines, or any carcasses, parts of carcasses, meat or meat food products of any such*

animals slaughter or handle in connection with slaughter any such animals in any manner not in accordance with sections 1901 to 1906 of Title 7.”

The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act 7 USC 1901 states, *“The Congress finds that the use of humane methods in the slaughter of livestock prevents needless suffering; results in safer and better working conditions for persons engaged in the slaughtering industry; brings about improvement of products and economies in slaughtering operations; and produces other benefits for producers, processors, and consumers which tend to expedite an orderly flow of livestock and livestock products in interstate and foreign commerce. It is the policy of the United States that the slaughtering of livestock and the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter shall be carried out only by humane methods.”*

The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act 7 USC 1902 states, *“No method of slaughtering or handling in connection with slaughtering shall be deemed to comply with the public policy of the United States unless it is humane.”* When an egregious situation exists, FSIS can refuse to render inspection and indefinitely withdraw inspection from an establishment provided the establishment is afforded the right to an administrative hearing.

Under the authority of the above Acts, FSIS has prescribed rules and regulations required for establishments producing meat and poultry products, including the requirements pertaining to the humane slaughter of livestock, as required by 9 CFR 313, and other matters. FSIS has also developed Rules of Practice regarding enforcement, which can be found in 9 CFR 500. The Rules of Practice describe the types of enforcement actions that FSIS may take to include a withholding action and/or suspension, with or without prior notification, and for filing a complaint to withdraw a Grant of Federal Inspection.

Findings/Basis for Action

On October 5, 2019, at approximately 1028 hours while performing observations of stunning effectivity, the FSIS Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian (SPHV) described the following observations. At approximately 1028 hours, the SPHV was walking pass the CO₂ stunning machines and noticed a market hog, shackled and hoisted by one hind leg and moving the unshackled hind leg as it was suspended on the bleed rail prior to the sticking station. The SPHV proceeded to the sticking station to examine the animal more closely. The market hog had rhythmic breathing and blinked its eyes when a hand was waved across its visual field. An establishment employee retrieved and loaded a handheld captive bolt gun located at the sticking station. The market hog began exhibiting a righting reflex and the employee effectively stunned it with the handheld captive bolt device. The SPHV remained at the sticking station and observed two additional market hogs exhibit righting reflexes. Both were effectively stunned by the employee with the captive bolt device. U.S. Rejected tag #B30897576 was placed on the loading gate to the CO₂ systems. The CO₂ concentration was 90%, 160 second stunning time, and 540 head per hour. The Assistant Operations Superintendent was informed of the regulatory control action.

The incident as described is egregious and constitutes a violation of the provisions of 21 U.S.C. 603, Section 3 (b) of the FMIA, and 7 U.S.C. 1901 and 1902 of the HMSA of 1978. Additionally, this incident fails to comply with the regulatory requirements of 9 CFR 313.5(a)(3), which states, *“On emerging from the carbon dioxide tunnel, the animals shall be in a state of surgical anesthesia and shall remain in this condition throughout shackling, sticking, and bleeding, except for swine in which death has been induced by the administration of carbon dioxide.”*

Summary and Conclusion

On September 9, 2004, FSIS published "Humane Handling and Slaughter Requirements and the Merits of a Systematic Approach to Meet Such Requirements" in the Federal Register Notice (54 Fed. Reg. 54625). On August 15, 2011, FSIS released FSIS Directive 6900.2 Revision 2, entitled, "Humane Handling and Slaughter of Livestock." Additionally, on October 23, 2013, FSIS introduced new guidance, titled "FSIS Compliance Guide for a Systematic Approach to the Humane Handling of Livestock." Within the guidance material is information intended to better ensure the humane treatment of livestock presented for slaughter. The guidance material provides a set of practices designed to minimize excitement, discomfort, and accidental injury regarding the humane handling of livestock to include the four components of a robust systematic approach to humane handling.

In cases where an egregious animal handling incident is observed by FSIS inspection program personnel (IPP), the Agency provides for regulatory discretion in the decision of the type of enforcement action issued if an establishment maintains a written systematic approach that meets the criteria for robustness.

Your establishment is currently operating under an animal handling and welfare program that provides for how your establishment will respond if an event of this nature occurs. The decision to issue a Notice of Intended Enforcement (NOIE) in lieu of a Notice of Suspension (NOS) is based on your implementation of a written systematic approach for the humane handling of livestock in a manner consistent with the Agency expectations for consideration of a robust systematic approach.

Based on the evaluation of this plan, your response in accordance with your animal handling program is expected to effectively address the regulatory issues identified within this letter. Before proceeding with any enforcement action, we are affording you the opportunity to demonstrate why a determination should not be made that your slaughter process is inadequate or to demonstrate that you have achieved regulatory compliance.

Please provide this office with a written response to this NOIE within three (3) working days from the date of your receipt of this letter. We will determine if any further actions are necessary based on your response. The corrective actions in your response should address the following:

1. Identify the specific reason(s) why the events described occurred.
2. Describe the specific action(s) that will be implemented to eliminate the cause of the incident and prevent future recurrences.
3. Describe the specific future monitoring activity or activities that your establishment will employ to ensure the actions implemented are effective.
4. Provide any supporting documentation and records maintained and associated with your proposed corrective actions and preventive measures.

If you have questions regarding this matter, you may contact (b) (6)

(b) (6)

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or you may contact this office at (630) 620-7474 or by fax at (630) 620-7599.

Please be advised that you have the right to appeal this matter. If you wish to appeal this action, contact:

Michael Watts
Executive Associate for Regulatory Operations
USDA, FSIS, OFO
Room 3168 - South Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250
Telephone: (202) 205-0194

In addition, you may also request a hearing regarding this determination pursuant to FSIS' Rules of Practice (9 CFR Part 500). The Rules of Practice were published in the Federal Register, Vol. 64, No. 228, on November 29, 1999. As specified in Section 500.5(d), should you request a hearing, FSIS will file a complaint that will include a request for an expedited hearing. If you wish to request a hearing regarding this determination, you should contact:

Scott C. Safian, Director
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit
Enforcement and Litigation Division
Stop Code 3753, PP3, Cubicle 9-205
355 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20024-3221
Telephone: (202) 418-8872
Fax: (202) 245-5097

Sincerely,

Samara M. Davis, DVM
Paul V. Wolseley
District Manager
Chicago District
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