



United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Certified Mail

Office of Field
Operations

August 3, 2023

Atlanta District Office
100 Alabama St., SW.
Suite 3R90
Atlanta, GA. 30303
Phone: 404-562-5900
Fax: 404-562-5877
Toll Free:
800-282-7005

Johnston's Locker Plant, Inc.
M11198
1480 Washington Street
Monticello, FL 32344
hal@johnstonsmeatmarket.com
(850) 997-5622

Attention: Mr. Hal Bennett, Owner

NOTICE OF SUSPENSION

This letter serves as official notification by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of our decision to withhold the federal marks of inspection and suspend the assignment of Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) at Johnston's Locker Plant, Est. M11198, located at 1480 Washington Street, Monticello FL 32344. This letter follows verbal notification of the suspension action, provided by **(b) (6)**, Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian, to Mr. Hal Bennett, Owner, at approximately 1:50PM on August 2, 2023. This action includes your Slaughter Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) processes employed at your establishment.

The decision to institute this enforcement action is in accordance with Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Rules of Practice 500.3(b), based on the determination that your establishment did not handle or slaughter animals humanely. The evidence demonstrates failure to comply with the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) (21 U.S.C. 603), the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) (7 U.S.C. 1901 *et seq.*), and the regulatory requirements (9 CFR Part 313).

Background/Authority

The FMIA (21 USC 601 *et seq.*) provides it is essential to the public interest that the health and welfare of consumers be protected, by assuring meat products distributed to them are wholesome, not adulterated, and properly marked, and labeled. The Act gives FSIS the authority, as designated by the Secretary of Agriculture, to prescribe rules and regulations describing sanitation requirements for inspected establishments and provide FSIS program personnel the authority to refuse to allow meat/meat food products to be

marked, labeled, stamped, or tagged as *inspected and passed*, to prevent the entry of adulterated products into commerce. Furthermore, the FMIA provides FSIS the authority to appoint inspectors to examine and inspect the method by which livestock are slaughtered and handled at slaughtering establishments.

The HMSA provides that 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 therefore declared to be 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.

Under the authority of the Acts, FSIS has prescribed rules and regulations required for establishments slaughtering and handling livestock, as required by 9 CFR Part 313. FSIS has also developed the Rules of Practice regarding administrative enforcement, 9 CFR Part 500. The Rules of Practice describe the types of enforcement actions that FSIS may take and include procedures for taking a withholding action and/or suspension, with or without prior notification, and for filing a complaint to withdraw a grant of inspection. Specifically, 9 CFR 500.3(b) states that FSIS may impose a suspension without providing prior notification due to handling or slaughtering of animals inhumanely.

Findings/Basis for Action

This Notice of Suspension is based upon your establishment being in violation of 9 CFR 313.2 (a), 9 CFR 313.2 (b), and 9 CFR 313.2 (c).

9 CFR 313.2 (a) states: *Driving of livestock from the unloading ramps to the holding pens and from the holding pens to the stunning area shall be done with a minimum of excitement and discomfort to the animals. Livestock shall not be forced to move faster than a normal walking speed.*

9 CFR 313.2 (b) states: *Electric prods, canvas slappers, or other implements employed to drive animals shall be used as little as possible in order to minimize excitement and injury. Any use of such implements which, in the opinion of the inspector, is excessive, is prohibited. Electrical prods attached to AC house current shall be reduced by a transformer to the lowest effective voltage not to exceed 50 volts AC.*

9 CFR 313.2 (c) states: *Pipes, sharp or pointed objects, and other items which, in the opinion of the inspector, would cause injury or unnecessary pain to the animal shall not be used to drive livestock.*

Specifically, on Wednesday, August 2, 2023, at approximately 7:30AM, while performing the humane handling task at Johnston's Locker Plant Inc., Est. M11198, Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) observed the following humane handling noncompliance involving two establishment employees. There were six cows at the facility (1 cow in pen #3, 3 cows in pen #2, and 2 cows in the alleyway). The employees were trying to move cattle from the alleyway to the knock box. One employee sprayed five of the cows with 145-degree Fahrenheit water while standing approximately 1 to 3 feet from the cows. All five cows were drenched with the water. IPP notified the plant employee to stop; however, the employee proceeded to pick up a metal pipe and poked one of the cows in the alleyway in its side with the metal pipe. A second plant employee climbed into the alleyway and forcefully kicked one of the cows twice in the middle of its face. The knock box was tagged with a U.S Reject Tag No. B-46 100515, and (b) (6), Kill floor and Processing manager, was notified.

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 (69 FR 54625). On September 24, 2020, FSIS released FSIS Directive 6900.2 Revision 3, 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.

When an establishment maintains a robust humane handling program, FSIS can exercise regulatory discretion when an inhumane handling or slaughter incident is observed. You do not currently maintain a written humane handling program for consideration.

Summary and Conclusion

Provisions of the FMIA outline FSIS' ability to refuse to render inspection and indefinitely withdraw inspection from an establishment, provided the establishment is afforded the right to an administrative hearing, when conditions exist where the slaughter and/or handling of livestock was not by a method in accordance with the Act(s). Evidence demonstrates your failure to meet regulatory requirements addressed in 9 CFR 313.2 (a), 9 CFR 313.2 (b), and 9 CFR 313.2 (c) constituting a violation of the humane slaughter requirements, and supporting the conclusion that your handling of livestock violated the provisions of the FMIA and HMSA.

Please provide a written response, inclusive of written corrective action and preventative measures, by addressing the following:

- Evaluate and identify the nature, cause of the incident.
- Describe the specific actions taken to eliminate the cause of the incident and prevent future recurrences.
- Describe specific monitoring activities planned to ensure future compliance.
- Provide any supporting documentation and records maintained and/or associated with the proposed corrective actions and preventative measures.

A determination of further administrative action will be made upon receipt and review of your submitted corrective actions and preventative measures. You are reminded that, as an operator of a federally inspected establishment, you are expected to comply with FSIS regulations and to take appropriate corrective actions to prevent the production of or adulterated products at your establishment. Please be advised that your failure to respond adequately to these issues may result in our initiating action to withdraw inspection from your establishment.

Appeal and Hearing Rights

You have the right to appeal this matter and can do so by contacting:

Melissa Moore,
Executive Associate for Regulatory Operations
Office of Field Operations
Food Safety and Inspection Service
United States Department of Agriculture
SB, Room 3160
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250
Email: Melissa.Moore1@usda.gov
Phone: (202) 450-0330

Pursuant to 9 CFR 500.5(d), you may also request a hearing regarding this determination. 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, please contact:

Scott C. Safian, Director
Enforcement Operations Staff (EOS)
Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA)
Food Safety and Inspection Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Stop Code 3753, SB - Room 2148
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

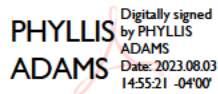
Mr. Hal Bennett, Owner
Johnston's Locker Plant, Inc, M11198

Notice of Suspension
August 3, 2023

Telephone: (202) 418-8872
Facsimile: (202) 245-5097
E-mail: AEBCorrespondence@usda.gov

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Phyllis Adams via telephone at (404) 562-5900 or via electronic mail at Phyllis.Adams@usda.gov. Additionally, you can contact the Atlanta District Office at (404) 562-5900 or by fax at (404) 652-5877.

Sincerely,

 Digitally signed
by PHYLLIS
ADAMS
Date: 2023.08.03
14:55:21 -0400

Dr. Phyllis Adams
District Manager

Mr. Hal Bennett, Owner
Johnston's Locker Plant, Inc, M11198

Notice of Suspension
August 3, 2023

cc: Melissa Moore, EARO
Phyllis Adams, DM
(b) (6), Humane Handling Enforcement Coordinator
Larry Hortert, OIEA Regional Director
Edward Hepburn, DDM
Barney Welch, DDM
Tracy Bryant, DDM
(b) (6), SEIAO
(b) (6) DCS
(b) (6), DVMS
(b) (6), FLS
(b) (6), SPHV
FO/Quarterly Reports