



December 4, 2024

Fauquier's Finest Custom Meat Processing, Inc.

M33940

ELECTRONIC MAIL on December 4, 2024

11746 AG Industrial Drive

Bealeton, VA 22712

(b) (6) @gmail.com; (b) (6) @gmail.com

540-349-7227

Attention: Michael Rodrigues (Plant Manager); (b) (6) (Supervisor)

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 Fauquier's Finest Custom Meat Processing, Inc., M33940, located at 11746 A.G. Industrial Drive, Bealeton, VA 22712. This letter follows verbal notification of the suspension action, provided by (b) (6), SPHV, to (b) (6), Plant Supervisor, at approximately 0820 hours on December 4, 2024. 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

At approximately 0803 hours on December 4, 2024, IPP observed a single lamb in the kill chute and a .22 caliber rifle was brought out to stun it. IPP walked off the floor while the shot was being taken. After hearing a single shot, IPP walked back onto the kill floor and observed that the lamb was bleeding from the head but was still standing and conscious. The floor employee looked to IPP but did not take further action. IPP gestured to the employee to shoot the lamb again, but the employee instead cut the animal's neck. The lamb then bled out before being shackled.

The occurrence of this inhumane handling incident as observed supports a conclusion that your methods of handling livestock violated the provisions of 21 U.S.C. 603, Section 3 (b) of the FMIA, 7 U.S.C 1902 of the HMTA of 1978, and 9 CFR 313. Specifically, you failed to meet the requirements of 9 CFR 313.16(a)(1) which states: "The firearms shall be employed in the delivery of a bullet or projectile into the animal in accordance with this section so as to produce immediate unconsciousness in the animal by a single shot before it is shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut. The animal shall be shot in such a manner that they will be rendered unconscious with a minimum of excitement and discomfort." This incident requires further enforcement action because the first attempt to stun was not effective, because the employee failed to provide an immediate corrective action for the ineffective stun, and because the employee made a cut to a conscious animal.

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 determine that an immediate suspension is not warranted when an inhumane handling or slaughter incident is

observed. Although your establishment has previously developed and implemented a systematic approach to humane handling that was considered robust, you have failed to effectively implement your program accordingly. Therefore, an immediate suspension is warranted for this incident.

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 313.16(a)(1), 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:

William Griffin
Executive Associate for Regulatory Operations
Office of Field Operations
Food Safety and Inspection Service
United States Department of Agriculture
South Building, Room 3164
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250
Email: William.Griffin1@usda.gov
Phone: 202-961-7156

Michael Rodrigues, Plant Manager
Fauquier's Finest Custom Meat Processing, Inc.

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

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Roger Murphy, Deputy District Manager (DDM) via telephone at 267-273-6919 or via electronic mail at Roger.Murphy@usda.gov. Additionally, you can contact the Raleigh District Office at 919-214-1984.

Sincerely,

**ARIAL
GUPTON**

Digitally signed by ARIAL
GUPTON
Date: 2024.12.04 14:25:45
-05'00'

Todd Furey
District Manager

Michael Rodrigues, Plant Manager
Fauquier's Finest Custom Meat Processing, Inc.

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cc: W. Griffin, EARO/FO
L. Hortert, RD/CID/OIEA
Q. Bowman-Blackwell, HHEC/FO
R. Murphy, DDM/RDO/FO
H. Havens, DDM/RDO/FO
A. Gupton, DDM/RDO/FO
D. Lilly, DCS/RDO/FO
(b) (6), DVMS/RDO/FO
(b) (6), SEIAO/RDO/FO
(b) (6), FLS/RDO/FO
(b) (6), FLS/RDO/FO
(b) (6), SPHV/RDO/FO
(b) (6), SPHV/RDO/FO
Quarterly Enforcement Report
Establishment File (Est. M33940)