



Food Safety and
Inspection Service

October 26, 2023

Certified Mail

Office of Field
Operations
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

Nettles Beef Processing, Inc.
M44200
147 S.W. County Road 240
Lake City, FL 32025
nettlesbeef@yahoo.com
(368) 397-5053

Attention: Mr. William J. Nettles:

NOTICE OF REINSTATEMENT OF SUSPENSION

This serves as official notification by Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the Notice of Reinstatement of Suspension at Nettles Beef Processing, Inc., Est. M44200, located at 147 S.W. County Road 240, Lake City, FL 32025. This Reinstatement of Suspension is based on the failure of Nettles Beef Processing, Inc., Est. M44200, to humanely handle livestock according to 9 CFR Part 313. This letter follows verbal notification of the reinstatement of suspension action, provided by (b) (6), SPHV, to Mr. John Nest, Plant Manager, at approximately 12:45 PM on October 26, 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

On October 16, 2023, FSIS issued a Notice of Suspension to your establishment because you failed to handle livestock as prescribed by 9 CFR Part 313 et seq. On October 25, 2023, FSIS issued a Notice of Suspension Held in Abeyance and allowed operations to resume, based on measures proposed and implemented by your establishment to assure the humane handling of livestock.

This Notice of Reinstatement of Suspension is based upon your establishment being in violation of 9 CFR 313.16(a)(1), 9 CFR 313.16(a)(3), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(i), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(ii), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(iii), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(iv), and 9 CFR 313.16(b)(2).

Specifically, on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at approximately 9:45am, while performing a humane handling inspection task and verifying the HATS categories, the FLS, SPHV, and CSI observed the following stunning noncompliance. Establishment personnel attempted to render a ram unconscious with a 22-long rifle firearm. The first, second, and third shots did not render the ram unconscious. The ram remained standing and had blood running from its nose after each shot. Establishment personnel checked for a palpebral response after each stunning attempt, but IPP were not able to verify this check

for safety considerations. The stunner rendered the ram unconscious on the fourth stun. The same 22-long rifle was used on all four stunning attempts. IPP did not tag the stun chute at this time due to this being the last animal of the day to be slaughtered. On post-mortem inspection there were three distinct points of contact observed on the head of the ram. Establishment management was notified of the noncompliance and that a Notice of Reinstatement of Suspension would be issued.

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 313.16 (a)(1), 9 CFR 313.16(a)(3), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(i), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(ii), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(iii), 9 CFR 313.16(b)(1)(iv), and 9 CFR 313.16(b)(2), 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 initiation of 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:

Karen Hunter,
Executive Associate for Regulatory Operations
Office of Field Operations
Food Safety and Inspection Service
United States Department of Agriculture
SB, Room 3129
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250
Email: Karen.Hunter@usda.gov
Phone: (202) 499-0275

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, Acting 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

Mr. William J. Nettles
Nettles Beef Processing, Inc.

Notice of Reinstatement of Suspension
October 26, 2023

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
PHYLLIS by PHYLLIS
ADAMS ADAMS
Date: 2023.10.26
14:22:38 -0400

Dr. Phyllis Adams
District Manager

Mr. William J. Nettles
Nettles Beef Processing, Inc.

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October 26, 2023

cc: Karen Hunter, 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
FO/Quarterly Reports