



Food Safety and Inspection
Service

Office of Field Operations
Jackson District Office
713 S Pear Orchard Rd.
Plaza 2, Suite 402
Ridgeland, MS 39157

October 12, 2023

Mason Hills, LLC
Est. Number: M47993
11652-A Wheatcroft Road N
Grand Bay, Alabama 36541
masonhillsfarm@gmail.com
251-865-7748

ELECTRONIC MAIL on October 12, 2023
FEDEX TRACKING # 773720011860

Attention: Mr. Joseph Mason, Owner

NOTICE OF SUSPENSION HELD IN ABEYANCE

On October 11, 2023, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued a Notice of Suspension to your establishment to withhold the federal marks of inspection and suspend the assignment of Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) at Mason Hills, Est. M47993, located at 11652-A Wheatcroft Road N, Grand Bay, AL. This action included your Slaughter Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) processes employed at your establishment. The decision to institute this enforcement action was 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 demonstrated 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).

On October 11, 2023, at 10:50 AM, a black bull was put in your establishment's knocking box for slaughter. There was an initial shot with the stun gun (captive bolt), based on conscious tracking eye movement the first shot was ineffective. The second shot was taken immediately but due to conscious tracking eye movement and conscious vocalizing, the second shot was ineffective. The animal was stuck with a knife to try and bleed it out before the third shot, while still conscious. There was some gun failure between the second and third shot, before a third shot was taken. Due to conscious vocalizing and righting efforts, the third shot was deemed ineffective. The Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian (SPHV) entered and examined the animal. The animal was then stunned again with a fourth attempt using the same captive bolt stunner as the third attempt which rendered the animal unconscious and it remained so thereafter. The knocking box was tagged with USDA tag no, B38909959. Ann Kittrell, Plant Manager, was notified that slaughter would be suspended due to this incident in humane handling.

On October 12, 2023, you submitted your first written response with corrective actions and preventive measures to meet regulatory requirements. The Jackson District Office (JDO) analyzed your response and advised you that the proffered corrective actions and preventive measures were not adequate. A request for clarification and additional information was sent via electronic mail from the JDO to your establishment on October 12, 2023.

Joseph Mason, Owner
Mason Hills, Est. M47993

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On October 12, 2023, you submitted a second response, which included all clarifications and additional information with written corrective actions and preventive measures to meet regulatory requirements. The Jackson District Office analyzed your proffered corrective actions and preventive measures and determined that the response adequately addressed the identified issues. On October 12, 2023, at approximately 10:45 AM, the FSIS Jackson District Office verbally informed you of FSIS's decision to hold the suspension in abeyance. This letter is to formally inform you of this action.

A copy of the FSIS Verification Plan (VP) will be provided to assist you in understanding the nature and importance of the Agency's verification activities. The FSIS Verification Plan is designed to verify that your establishment properly implements the revisions to its humane handling of animals and other corrective actions and preventive measures stated in your October 12, 2023, responses and that these revisions and corrective actions and preventive measures are effective in ensuring future regulatory compliance. The FSIS Verification Plan identifies your corrective actions, the regulatory requirement(s), and the PHIS Task under which FSIS officials will verify the implementation and effectiveness of your proffered action plan. Only FSIS can amend the verification plan and any modifications to your submitted acceptable corrective actions made during the abeyance period will need to be submitted in writing to FSIS for verification of compliance prior to implementation by your establishment.

Please be advised that this suspension of inspection at your establishment will remain in Abeyance pending verification by FSIS that your proposed corrective actions and preventive measures have been implemented and are effective in ensuring future regulatory compliance. Agency personnel will begin immediate verification of your corrective actions and preventive measures.

It is important for you to understand that FSIS has the responsibility to initiate action if your establishment fails to operate in accordance with the regulations, or conditions occur that do not comply with the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. In these situations, FSIS personnel will take regulatory control of product or other appropriate action.

Please be further advised that as a federally inspected establishment, you are expected to comply with the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, and all applicable regulations and other requirements concerning the preparation, sale, and transportation of meat products. Failure to comply with these requirements or to effectively implement the measures addressed in your responses, dated October 12, 2023, could result in the immediate suspension of inspection at your establishment or other appropriate action(s).

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Larry Davis via telephone at (601) 863-4206 or via electronic mail at larry.davis4@usda.gov. Additionally, you can contact the Jackson District Office at (601) 965-4312 or by fax at (601) 965-5901.

Sincerely,
**KERMIT
HARVEY**

 Digitally signed by
KERMIT HARVEY
Date: 2023.10.12 10:52:10
-05'00'

for:

Dr. Larry Davis
District Manager
Jackson District Office

Joseph Mason, Owner
Mason Hills, Est. M47993

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October 12, 2023

Cc: Ms. Melissa Moore, EARO
(b) (6), Humane Handling Enforcement Coordinator
Mr. Larry Hortert, OIEA Regional Director
Dr. Larry Davis, DM
Dr. Kermit Harvey, DDM
Ms. Cheryl Henry, DDM
Dr. Erin Moses, DDM/FLS
(b) (6), SEIAO
(b) (6), DCS
(b) (6), DVMS
(b) (6), FLS
(b) (6), SPHV at Est. M47993
(b) (6), CSI at Est. M47993
FO/Quarterly Reports