



***FAX ALERT!***

# **NMA EXTRA TRIMMINGS**

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**To: NMA Members**

**Fr: Rosemary Mucklow, NMA Executive Director**

**Re: BSE Update**

December 31, 2003

As of today, downers are unacceptable for slaughter, following the announcement by Secretary Veneman yesterday. It is not clear whether this only means that no downers will be accepted at slaughter plants, or whether it will also include animals that go down in the pen, before or after *ante mortem* inspection. In the interim, a strict interpretation is advisable. Downers presented for slaughter will be euthanized and sent to inedible rendering. USDA is considering options for monitoring these downers.

All other changes, (1) banning specified risk material and tissues from the human food chain, (2) requiring additional process controls for establishments using advanced meat recovery (AMR), (3) holding meat from cattle that have been targeted for BSE surveillance testing until the test has confirmed negative, and (4) prohibiting the air-injection stunning of cattle, are subject to the publication of interim final rules in the *Federal Register* and will be effective with the publication. It is expected that the rules will be published sometime next week. The rationale for the distinction is that the Secretary has authority, other than the FMIA, to ban downers. All other changes she announced are subject to rulemaking, albeit interim final emergency rules.

Upon publication of a rule in the *Federal Register*, specified risk materials will include: skull, brain, trigeminal ganglia, eyes, vertebral column, spinal cord and dorsal root ganglia of cattle over 30 months of age and the small intestine of cattle of all ages. These materials are prohibited from use in the human food supply. However, it should be noted that during today's teleconference officials said that the entire small intestine wouldn't be banned for human consumption, only the distal ileum.

By previous regulations, FSIS has prohibited spinal cord from being included in products labeled as "meat." The new rule, effective upon publication in the *Federal Register*, would expand that prohibition to include dorsal root ganglia, clusters of nerve cells connected to the spinal cord along the vertebrae column, and will still include spinal cord tissue. The vertebral column and skull in cattle 30 months and older will be considered inedible, and can't be used for AMR. If dorsal root ganglia is found in AMR product derived from livestock over 30 months of age, it will be considered adulterated. It was formerly considered misbranded, and could be relabeled mechanically separated beef. USDA will prohibit the use of mechanically separated meat in human food with the publication of the new rule.

The Secretary also announced that USDA will immediately begin implementation of a verifiable system of national animal identification, which has been in the works for more over a year and a half.

As to the status of the traceback investigation, the primary line of which goes back to a farm in Alberta, Canada, a Canadian health certificate dated August 28, 2001 indicates that 82 cattle (including the positive cow) were cleared for shipment to the U.S. However, only 81 arrived, suggesting that one animal remained in Canada.

The next teleconference will be held Friday, January 2, 2004 at 11:00 a.m. EST. Visit <http://www.usda.gov/> for updates. We will continue to keep you informed.

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