



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

Washington, D.C.
20250

JUL 25 2012

Ms. Kathryn Heinisch
[REDACTED]@verizon.net

Dear Ms. Heinisch:

Thank you for your e-mail to the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regarding horse slaughter. I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns.

FSIS is the public health regulatory agency in USDA responsible for ensuring that meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. FSIS enforces the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), and the Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA), which require Federal inspection and regulation of meat, poultry, and processed egg products prepared for distribution in commerce for use as human food.

Following a decision by Congress in November 2011 to lift the ban on horse slaughter, two establishments, one located in Missouri and one in New Mexico, have applied for a grant of inspection exclusively for equine slaughter. FSIS is currently reviewing those applications.

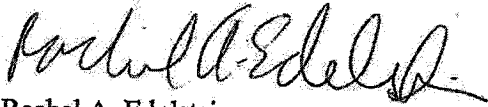
However, given that the agency last conducted a horse inspection 6 years ago, FSIS has determined that despite the congressional decision to lift the ban, the agency will require a significant amount of time to update its testing and inspection processes and methods before it is fully able to develop a future inspection regimen.

You also raised broader concerns about meat inspection and safety. FSIS has more than 7,600 federal inspection program personnel who inspect meat, poultry, and processed egg products to make sure the FMIA, PPIA, and EPIA are enforced. If a slaughter or processing plant violates the regulations during the course of a shift, FSIS can take enforcement actions that could include withholding FSIS inspection. This action effectively shuts down a plant's operation until the plant takes actions to correct the problem. Again, the plant would not be able to produce any more product until FSIS determines that the plant has corrected its problems. FSIS also maintains a nationwide surveillance, investigation, and enforcement program designed to ensure that meat, poultry and egg products in storage and distribution are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled.

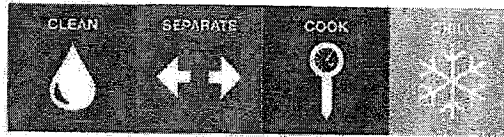
Ms. Kathryn Heinisch
Page 2

Thank you again for writing. I encourage you to visit the FSIS Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov for information on food safety.

Sincerely,



Rachel A. Edelstein
Acting Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development



Check your Steps at <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/>