

Engeljohn Discusses BSE Policy Implications During Symposium

STILLWATER, Okla. – The Food & Agricultural Products Center hosted a Food Safety Symposium to discuss prions and enterotoxins.

Daniel Engeljohn, executive associate of policy analysis and formulation for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service, gave a presentation on policy implications at USDA-FSIS concerning bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE.

Engeljohn began his presentation by defining the responsibility of FSIS.

"FSIS is the public health regulatory agency with USDA," he said. "FSIS ensures that the commercial supply of meat, poultry and processed egg food products in the U.S. is not adulterated or misbranded."

One way to minimize human exposure of BSE is to address specified risk materials that, through scientific studies, have been shown to contain the BSE agent in cattle infected with the disease, Engeljohn said. These SRMs should be declared as inedible and prohibited from use in human food. He also stressed that non-ambulatory or disabled cattle must be condemned since there is currently no rapid test to determine whether or not they have BSE.

On Jan. 12, 2004, FSIS issued four policies as emergency actions as a result of the BSE case identified in late December 2003. SRMs, advanced meat recovery, air injection stunning and surveillance hold-and-test were among the policies issued.

"This was the first time FSIS invoked authority for immediate rulemaking," Engeljohn said.

FSIS issued five notices or policy clarifications and held five workshops around the country providing laboratory guidance for detection of CNS-type tissues in boneless meat and developing verification tools for proper removal.

Before implementation of the proposed FSIS rules, a comment period was held until May 7, 2004.

"Just under 22,000 comments were received during the comment period," Engeljohn said. "About 90 percent of the comments supported not slaughtering downer animals."

He also said that very few changes would be made to the proposed rules even after the comment period.

Engeljohn said a contingency plan is also in place. The plan indicates that if industry begins testing, then non-regulatory policy clarification needs to be evaluated and if

diseases are greater than expected, long- and short-term regulatory and non-regulatory fixes need to be investigated.

Stanley E. Gilliland, FAPC food microbiologist and chair of the symposium, said having a government official speak during the symposium gave the participants some valuable information that they need to know.

“Dr. Engeljohn’s experience with food safety issues and the policies of the USDA and FSIS was an important contribution to the symposium,” Gilliland said.

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