Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

Begin the Summertime Grilling Season with a Food Safety Home Run

Days are getting warmer and baseball season is in full swing—all signs that the summer cookout season is here. As you welcome the sunny weather, USDA reminds you that safe grilling practices are the key to making your cookout a big hit with your guests.

The experts at the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline have broken down safe cooking and handling practices into four simple steps: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill. To get more information on how to round those bases, go to *www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2011/05/0221.xml* or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). Recorded messages are available 24 hours a day, and the Hotline is staffed with food safety experts Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time.

But one of the best resources available before you plan a summer cookout is USDA's virtual representative, *Ask Karen*, a feature that allows you to ask food safety-related questions 24 hours a day. Visit *Ask Karen* at *AskKaren.gov*.

Ask Karen is also available as an app for your iPad, iPhone or Android mobile device, so you can take her with you to the grocery store, to the barbecue grill or wherever you may have food safety questions. Go to *m.AskKaren.gov* on your mobile device's browser, or download the app for free from the Android and iTunes app stores. In portable format and available 24/7, *Mobile Ask Karen* is your food safety base coach all season long!

Inside this Issue

New Resource Available for FSIS Stakeholders

Each week in the *Constituent Update*, FSIS includes information about new regulations, along with a link to them.

For information about existing policies and directives, the agency is now making available to the public, via RSS feed, what it calls "Policy Pal." Policy Pal is a weekly issuance developed, initially, to remind employees of important existing policies, such as past notices, directives or *AskFSIS* Q&As.

Topics included in Policy Pal are taken from cleared and published policy documents. Visitors to Policy Pal this week will find information about FSIS Directive 7000.2; employee safety directives; pest control programs; and products from custom slaughter of livestock, among other topics.

For more information about Policy Pal, visit *www.fsis.usda. gov/News_&_Events/Feeds/index.asp* and *www.fsis.usda.gov/ regulations_&_policies/Compliance_Assistance/index.asp*.

If you have an interest in a particular topic that is not included, you may submit your recommendation through *AskFSIS* at *http:// askfsis.custhelp.com.* Be sure to include "Policy Pal Suggestion" in the subject line, along with your contact information.

PHIS Update

FSIS previously announced that it would be implementing the import function of the Public Health Information System (PHIS) in June 2011.

As a result of a delay in implementation of the domestic functions of PHIS nationwide, FSIS will also postpone the implementation of the PHIS import function.

FSIS will continue to provide up-to-date information related to PHIS on the FSIS website, which can be accessed at *www.fsis. usda.gov/PHIS/index.asp*. FSIS will also provide further guidance and information regarding the PHIS import function prior to implementation. Look for additional details about PHIS in future issues of the *Constituent Update*.

AskKaren.gov

Have a Question? Ask Karen in Spanish, Too.

Pregúntele a Karen is a virtual food safety representative with information for consumers about preventing foodborne illness, safe food handling and storage, and the safe preparation of meat, poultry and processed egg products.

As available in English, customers can also chat live in Spanish and obtain food safety information. To access *Pregúntele a Karen*, go to *pregunteleakaren.gov/*.

Get Answers at *AskFSIS*

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, *AskFSIS* offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As. To view recently posted topics, visit *http://askfsis.custhelp.com/*.

Sanitation SOP Monitoring Frequency
http://askfsis.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1602

Updates on FSIS Testing for *E. coli*

Weekly updates for the agency's raw beef *E. coli* sampling program are posted to the FSIS website.

For comparative previous and current year results, go to *www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Ground_Beef_E.coli_Testing_Results/index.asp*.

New Podcasts

Tune in to podcasts on selecting, handling and preparing meat and poultry products to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. FSIS released these podcasts to be helpful consumers.

USDA Changes Consumer Guidance for Cooking Pork (English and Spanish)

Check out this podcast at *http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/Podcasts/index.asp*. Spanish language consumer podcasts are available at *http://www.fsis.usda.gov/En_Espanol/Podcasts_SP/index.asp*. Video-casts in American Sign Language are available at *http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news_&_events/SignFSIS/index.asp*.