

BIFSCo Alert November 2007

We have all been closely following the recent recalls of beef products. Continued diligence is needed to ensure we are implementing prudent and necessary interventions and process controls to enhance the safety of beef products.

The following “Critical Things To Do List” was distributed previously and the points listed should be continually addressed throughout the year.

- Ø The hide removal process at slaughter is the most critical step in the chain to reduce/control the transfer of *E. coli* from the hide to the carcass. Review effective dressing procedures with employees on the line and on a continual basis – re-emphasize the critical steps.
- Ø *E. coli*, if present, is most likely at very low levels of contamination [i.e., only a few cells per sample]. Rigor of sampling programs and lab testing sensitivity are both key factors in identifying such ‘low level’ contamination incidence. If sampling methods and lab procedures lack robustness or sensitivity, they will not be as effective in helping avoid downstream recalls. A Best Practice sampling document is in development and will be available soon on www.bifsc.org
- Ø During the “high incident *E. coli* season” [normally April through October], additional actions may be needed at both slaughter plants as well as further processing plants, to provide added assurance for preventing *E. coli* contamination of raw ground beef. Additional precautionary actions or added interventions may be needed in the ‘high incident season’, or on days with assignable cause high incidence. Some additional actions to consider are: treat trim with antimicrobials prior to grinding; antimicrobial treatment, irradiation, or cooking of finished products; or additional rigorous sampling of finished ground beef.
- Ø The primary testing system across the industry today is combo testing of trimmings, although some companies also conduct finished product testing, either as a stand-alone test without pre-grind tested trim, or in a combination of both tested trim followed by finished product testing. In periods of high incidence, more rigorous testing may be adopted, especially for operations that do not have full control or confidence in the robustness and rigor of their primary testing program.

Other Options for Processors of Ground Beef and Non-intact Products

Handling of Products Destined for Non-intact Processing and Ground Beef Production

An intervention may be applied to subprimals and subsequent trim prior to any further processing.

Approved interventions are listed in Directive 7120.1 which can be accessed using the following link
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/7120.1Amend13.pdf>

Abbreviated Table of Approved Interventions That Are Most Commonly Used

SUBSTANCE	PRODUCT	AMOUNT	REFERENCE	LABELING REQUIREMENTS
Acidified sodium chlorite	Red meat, red meat parts and organs, and on processed, comminuted, formed meat products	Applied as a spray or dip, the additive is produced by mixing an aqueous solution of sodium chlorite with any GRAS acid to achieve a pH in the range of 2.2 to 3.0, then further diluting this solution with a pH elevating agent such that the resultant sodium chlorite concentration does not exceed 1200 ppm, and the chlorine dioxide concentration does not exceed 30 ppm. The pH of the use solution is between 5.0 and 7.5	Food Contact Substance Notification No. FCN 450	None under the accepted conditions of use (6)
Lactic acid	Beef and pork sub-primals and trimmings	2 percent to 5 percent solution of lactic acid not to exceed 55 ⁰ C	Acceptability determination	None under the accepted conditions of use (1)
Peroxyacetic acid, hydrogen peroxide, acetic acid	Meat and poultry carcasses, parts, trim and organs	Maximum concentrations for meat carcasses, parts, and organs: Peroxyacetic acids 220 ppm, hydrogen peroxide 75 ppm;	21 CFR 173.370	None under the accepted conditions of use (3)

Contact your sanitizer chemical supply company or other resource for more information and assistance in developing a program that works in your operation.

Use of Trim Generated During Processing of Intact Muscles

A tracking system should be developed to properly identify the source of the trim produced during subprimal processing that will be used in the production of ground beef. It is recommended that trim be ground within 24 hours and stored under 41⁰ F.

Use the following link to access complete Best Practice documents. <http://www.bifsc.org/BestPractices.aspx>

This information is brought to you by the Beef Industry Food Safety Council (BIFSCo). We hope that you find this reminder as well as the information it contains helpful. Also, if you have questions or need assistance in any way to address safety issues in your facility, please do not hesitate to contact any of our BIFSCo volunteers to assist you in addressing those issues.

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