



P.O. Box 269, Elizabethtown, PA 17022

Phone: 717/367-1168 Fax: 717/367-9096

Website: www.aamp.com Email: aamp@aamp.com

SPLITTING CARCASSES OF CATTLE 30 MONTHS OF AGE AND OLDER

2/17/2004

To: AAMP MEMBERS
MEAT SLAUGHTERS AND MEAT PROCESSORS

SUBJECT: SPLITTING CARCASSES OF CATTLE 30 MONTHS OF AGE AND OLDER

This information has been created to clarify the issues related to splitting carcasses of cattle that are 30 months of age and older. According to Docket No. 03-025IF (*Prohibition of the Use of Specified Risk Materials for Human Food and Requirements for the Disposition of Non-Ambulatory Disabled Cattle*) the vertebral column, spinal cord, and dorsal root ganglia from cattle that are 30 months of age and older were identified as specified risk materials.

According to correspondence with the FSIS Technical Service Center, **carcasses of cattle that are 30 months of age and older can still be split as establishments have done in the past.**

FSIS Notice 10-04 (*Questions and Answers, Regarding the Age Determination of Cattle and Sanitation*) clarified the use of equipment for the harvesting of cattle that are 30 months of age and older. Establishments have two options: (1) separate equipment can be used for cutting through SRMs *or* (2) the establishment can segregate the two age groups and slaughters or processes the younger group first, then routine operational sanitation procedures apply (in accordance with 9 CFR Part 416). For example:

- The establishment uses a dedicated saw to split the carcass from cattle 30 months and older
- The establishment uses a knife to cut through the edible portions of the carcass and a separate saw to only cut through the vertebral column (e.g. when quartering a carcass). Any equipment that is used to cut through SRMs (vertebral column, spinal cord, dorsal root ganglion, etc. of cattle 30 months and older) must be cleaned and sanitized before being used on carcasses or parts from cattle less than 30 months. For example:
 - Splitting carcasses of mixed age groups in the slaughter department.
 - Breaking quarters of mixed age groups into smaller portions in the fabrication department.
 - A knife that is used to sever the head from the carcasses of mixed age groups.

It is also noted that the equipment need not be cleaned to a pre-operational state before sanitizing. The organic materials must be removed to ensure adequate sanitization (this is similar to what is required when a saw cuts through an abscess).

If an establishment slaughters only cattle that are 30 months of age and older, clean up is not required between each of the 30 month of age and older cattle. Clean up is only required if an establishment goes from cattle that are 30 months of age and older to cattle that are younger than 30 months of age.

If possible, all visible SRM debris is to be removed on the kill floor (i.e. spinal cord). SRM debris is to be removed with a knife (trimming) from exposed muscle or by scraping the debris from the exposed bone before washing. After washing and passing final inspection, the only remaining SRM material is the vertebral column which is considered "inedible material" to be removed during carcass processing, segregated and disposed of as is any "inedible" material.

Although scientifically, cleaning and sanitizing methods that are commonly in place to address contamination cannot destroy the prions that are responsible for causing BSE, this procedure has been accepted by FSIS.