

USDA proposes water saving measure

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman, poultry establishment operators could reduce water used to chill freshly slaughtered

poultry by 50 per cent if chlorine were added.

Under the proposal, water coming into poultry chilling tanks could be reduced to one-half gallon per turkey or goose, and one-quarter gallon per frying chicken, duck or guinea, but only if the water contained 20 parts per million chlorine. This would help assure that the reduced amount of water would not contaminate the product, Ms. Foreman said. She said the proposed chlorine level conforms with Food and Drug Administration policy.

Under federal poultry inspection regulations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Quality Service requires that freshly slaughtered poultry be cooled quickly to prevent spoilage, Ms. Foreman explained. This usually is done by immersing the carcasses in tanks of water chilled mechanically or by ice. These tanks hold several thousand gallons of water, which is continuously exchanged.

At present, inspection regulations require that water be exchanged at the rate of at least one gallon for each turkey and at least one-half gallon for each frying chicken entering the chiller. These minimum levels were set when water supplies were not considered an environmental concern. Since then water has become recognized as a critical resource and disposal of large amounts of water as an economic waste.

Following a study of poultry chilling operations by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Va., USDA conducted a study and

field tests to determine if water intake could be reduced without affecting the wholesomeness of the product.

The VPI study indicated that a 50 per cent reduction in the minimum water exchange rate would have no significant adverse effect on the microbiological quality of the product or the sanitary condition of chill water.

In its review, USDA also considered recent findings of the U.S. advisory committee on salmonellosis

Result of the studies and field tests prompted today's proposal. This proposed amendment to poultry inspection regulations was published in the April 4 Federal Register.

Comments on the proposal are invited until July 3. Written views should be submitted in duplicate to the Office of the Hearing Clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Copies will be available for public inspection in the clerk's office, room 1077, south building, at the department headquarters.

DER water quality meeting set May 10

HARRISBURG — The Study Advisory Committee of the Department of Environmental Resources' Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan for Study Area 3 will meet 7 p.m. on May 10, at the Holiday East Motor Hotel, Highspire, Pa. This is a public meeting and all interested citizens are invited to attend.

At this meeting, representatives from agriculture, industry, environmental groups and concerned taxpayers will take on the issues centering around the alternatives for wastewater management. Recently, the Federal government has offered incentives for states to consider alternatives to conventional sewage treatment plants that may prove to be more affordable to smaller, rural communities. These alternatives include community septic systems, lagoons and land application of wastes

generated by a community. DER is asking the public for guidance on when and where these alternatives should be considered in their management of water quality in the State.

A number of alternatives for the management of wastewater have been proposed by Gannet, Fleming, Corrdry and Carpenter, the study consultant for Study Area 3. This area includes Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Schuylkill and York counties.

The meeting is sponsored by the Capitol Region Planning and Development Agency in an effort to provide citizens the opportunity to express their opinions on alternatives for their community as the plan is developed.

Further information is available from CRPDA, Harrisburg Host Inn, Suite 124, Harrisburg, Pa. Telephone: 717-939-7827.

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Comment time extended for nitrites in processed meats

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The meat industry will be given additional time — until June 16 — to submit data concerning the use of nitrites and nitrates in dry cured cuts and fermented sausages, including dry and semi-dry sausages, Carol Tucker Foreman, assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services, announced recently.

Ms. Foreman said the additional time is necessary to complete testing that is presently being conducted by various laboratories.

Last Oct. 18, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a notice stating that nitrates and nitrites used in the manufacture of cured meat products have the potential of interacting with components of meat to form carcinogenic nitrosamines. The meat industry was asked to submit data showing how various cured meat products can be manufactured using nitrates and nitrites without resulting in the formation of carcinogenic nitrosamines either during processing or preparation for eating.