

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Foreman's no nitrite proposal questioned

Editor's Note:

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By JOHN F. YARBROUGH

There is never a dull moment for the poultry industry as it attempts to cope with the proliferation of proposals, plans and program changes emending from the federal agencies in Washington that seek to run the businesses and lives of all Americans.

Most recently the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Food and Consumer Services, Carol Tucker Foreman, has issued a new proposal for the manufacture and labeling of bacon, ham, frankfurters, corned beef and similar products that are manufactured with little or no nitrites or nitrates.

This proposal raises several important questions. Does this mean that FSQS is preparing the way for some final ruling that would exclude the use of nitrites and nitrates, or is this really a sincere effort to assist processors of red meat and poultry who want to manufacture such products? Ms. Foreman says the proposal is based on response to consumer requests for nitrite-free products. No processors we've talked with are aware that there is any consumer demand for such products.

Another question of great significance, we think, in

terms of maintaining a safe food supply, relates to the instructions required on the labels which FSQS would require on these low nitrite or no nitrite and nitrate meat products. For example, how many housewives know the temperature in their refrigerators? We asked a half dozen at random and none of them knew.

Is there any area in the average refrigerator, other than in the frozen food compartment, where nitrite free products of the types described above, can be properly stored at 40 degrees or under?

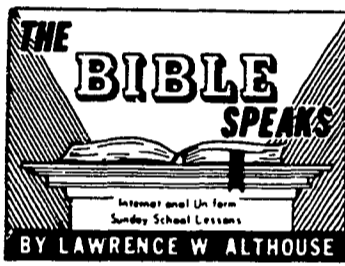
Sometimes that which is designed to remove confusion leads to confusion. The proposed regulations for low or no nitrite products will lead to confusion and possibly to tragic mistakes for consumers. We believe the average housewife who is used to picking up some sliced or whole ham, bacon, chicken franks or frankfurters, corned beef and similar products is not going to stop and read the label to see whether she has picked up bacon with low nitrite or regular bacon. With one kid in the shopping basket and another running up and down the aisles, or tugging at her skirt, and with the other pressures and demands that make her rush through her shopping, we believe she will often and perhaps more often than not, pay absolutely no attention to the proposed warnings - primarily because they will never register on her mind, IF she sees them. Furthermore, is she going to treat these products different when she is planning for or packing a picnic lunch or preparing for a church supper, etc.? We think not, and therein lies a new and increased hazard, one much

greater than any suspicion hazard from nitrite treated products.

We are not aware of any approved techniques that will make the type products Ms. Foreman proposes feasible to the food processor. We do not believe there is a demand for such products and we can't envision manufacturers tooling up to produce these products, with the costly R&D required, to say nothing of the marketing costs and sales and advertising expenditures that would be necessary to successfully launch another line of products.

Maybe we can give the lady Assistant Secretary a plus mark for what she must believe is a compromise. But we believe the inherent dangers associated with her proposal are too great to ignore.

We must return to the basic facts of meat preservation. The method of using nitrites as a preservative and flavor additive in many meat products is unquestionably the best and the safest way of protecting the public from botulism. Neither Ms. Foreman nor the producers of nitrite free products - products that require very special handling at the plant, in transportation, in storage at distribution centers, in display cases in the supermarket and in the hands of or the refrigerators of consumers, can afford to take the risks of food poisoning which would be so greatly increased by this proposal. On paper this proposal may sound like a "good" idea. But we don't know many producers or retailers who will want to bear the risks thus entailed.



PRESCRIPTION FOR INSOMNIA

Lesson for May 28, 1978

Background Scripture:
Acts 12.
Devotional Reading
2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

Let's get the picture of a very tense situation.

Herod the King had begun a violent persecution of Christians in his kingdom. James the brother of John was killed outright. Simon Peter, the chief Apostle, was arrested and thrown into prison under heavy guard and it seemed likely that Herod would have him killed also in order to please the Jewish trouble-makers who were daily increasing their complaints against the church.

Behold an angel
If you had been Simon Peter, how would you have felt? It seemed everything was crashing down about

him and he could hardly have forgotten how he had denied his Master three times on a similar night of great crisis. So how do we find him? Luke tells us: "The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping..."

-A valued associate senselessly slain, the church under persecution, the faith endangered, himself likely to lose his life...and Peter was sleeping!

What was his secret prescription for finding sleep on a night when any other man would have become an insomniac? Perhaps part of the prescription is found in

Luke's assurance that "earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church" (11.5). There was comfort in knowing that he was not facing this ordeal alone, but was sharing it with his friends and co-workers who helped to bear his burden with their earnest prayers. Simon Peter had already seen what prayer by these people could accomplish, although we suspect he was looking, not so much for release from jail, as help to come through this ordeal with his loyalty to Christ intact.

Now I am sure
There had been another

night when Peter's loyalty had not fared so well. That night, knowing his Master was imprisoned and likely to be executed, Peter had felt frightened and alone. Yet, after Christ had been resurrected, Peter realized that he had not been alone that night and he need not have feared. For when God's enemies had done their worst, Christ was raised up and vindicated.

So, as Peter sat in Herod's dungeon, he knew that he was not alone, that even if he was killed, the power of the resurrected Christ would be more than enough to vindicate him and save him from extinction. Let Herod

do his worst, it would not matter.

That Peter was not really anticipating escape is evident in his assumption that the appearance of the angel is really a dream. He knew that God would win in this situation, but he did not realize that God's victory would mean his escape from Herod's clutches. It didn't matter how God won his victory to Peter, for either way Peter knew that he was securely in God's keeping.

This, then, was the prescription of faith and loyalty that allowed Peter to sleep on a night that should have kept him awake.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Max Smith, Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

Phone 394-6851



TO MOW WEEDS
Don't be guilty of allowing the weeds in your pasture field, or your vacant lot, go to seed. Many permanent pastures contain various kinds of weeds that will produce seed and be a greater problem next Summer.

Also, many of the grasses are now shooting seedheads and should be clipped. This will encourage new growth and a better pasture. The clippings will dry and livestock will eat them readily. Owners of vacant lots and fields should be good citizens and prevent weed seeds from blowing over the community. If the area is mowed in the next week or

so, and then mowed again in late July or early August, weeds will not have a chance to mature.

In addition, the greatest value will be better public relations with your neighbors.

TO TOPDRESS ALFALFA FIELDS

The first cutting of alfalfa will soon be ready to harvest in southeastern Pennsylvania. As soon as this crop is removed, it is suggested that the field be topdressed with a phosphorus-potash fertilizer. One such as a 0-20-20 or 0-15-30 will provide the phosphorus and potash needed. No nitrogen should

be needed on established alfalfa stands.

Alfalfa is a very valuable forage crop, either for home feeding or for sale. Growers are urged to make every effort to get maximum yields. The county average of about 3.5 tons per acre of alfalfa hay is not good enough. Many of our crop authorities feel this yield can be greatly increased through better management.

TO PREPARE GRAIN BINS

In another month the winter barley crop should be about ready to harvest. The winter wheat will soon follow early in July. Growers who are going to store their new

grain on the farm should be getting the grain bins ready.

It is best to clean out the old grain rather than put new grain on top. After the bin is well cleaned it should be treated with Malathion (premium grade) or with Methoxychlor to kill any grain insects. This is a good rainy day job prior to grain harvest.

Details of this stored grain and grain bin treatment can be found in the 1978 Agronomy Guide. Protect the new grain by storing it in an insect-free bin.

TO KEEP PESTICIDE RECORDS

Most farmers will be using one or more sprays or chemicals during the

cropping season. This same thing might be true with dairy and livestock producers. If accurate records are kept of these treatments, it might save a lot of trouble and loss of income in case there is some question.

In many areas of food and fiber marketing Food and Drug representatives are checking for pesticide residues. They have been

found in items where the producer followed regulations and every recommended practice.

In all cases it is strongly advised to make record of the date, the material, the rate, and all details. It might save your "neck".

Farm Calendar

Today, May 27
Four-wheel drive pull at Rough and Tumble Engineering grounds, Kinzer, 6 p.m.

Monday, May 29
Have a happy Memorial Day.

Tuesday, May 30
Public hearing reconvenes for Southcentral Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Area, 10 a.m. in Room B of the Farm Show Building, Harrisburg.

Wednesday, May 31
Board of directors meeting of the Berks County Conservation District, 2 p.m. at the Ag Center, west of Reading.

Strawberry growers' meeting, Robert Martin farm, Hanover, 7 p.m.

Friday, June 2
Baltimore-Harford County dairy princess pageant at the Towson Plaza; demonstrations and displays at 4 p.m., pageant begins at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 3
Loganville 4-H garden project at Pleasant Acres.

Performance tested ram sale, Penn State University, Meat Animal Evaluation Center, University Park, 2 p.m.

Lancaster 4-H County Council car wash, at the Farm and Home Center, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Charolais breeders' sale, Carlisle Livestock Auction Market, noon.

Rural Route

By Tom Armstrong

