

USDA seeks to change in meat, poultry labeling

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A regulation proposed today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture would assure meat and poultry plant operators of equitable treatment of all applications submitted to USDA for label approval, according to Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman.

Foreman said this proposal is the first in a series of major USDA food labeling reforms.

"The revised policy maintains the integrity of the labeling system — a system that protects the consumer by careful review of every label for a meat or

poultry product," Foreman said. She said the proposed change is in line with recommendations made by USDA's inspector general.

Pre-market approval by USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service is required by the agency for all labels to be used on federally inspected meat and poultry products. Currently, many applications are hand-carried by plant personnel or their representatives, and are often processed before those applications arriving by mail.

"Under the proposal, all applications would be reviewed in the order in which they are received,

regardless of the manner of delivery," said Foreman. "Overall, the turn-around time for label review would decrease significantly."

Applications delivered both by mail and in-person would be grouped together and reviewed on a daily basis. Processed applications would be returned by mail unless applicants make special arrangements to pick up the documents.

Exceptions to the first-come, first-serve policy would be granted only in case of emergency, such as meeting deadlines for military or other government agency needs.

A similar regulation was

proposed June 20, 1974, but never made final. FSQS officials said it is appropriate to solicit additional information.

Although USDA has the authority to amend an internal procedure such as this without public input, Foreman said it is in the public interest to accept comments for 60 days.

Under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act, FSQS has the authority to establish procedures for the review and approval of all labels to be used on federally inspected meat and poultry products.

Comments on the proposal

should be submitted by April 28 to the executive secretariat, attention: Annie Johnson, room 3807-S, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

For more information contact Robert Hibbert, acting director, Meat and

Poultry Standards at Labeling Division, Compliance, FSQS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. (202) 447-6042.

Notice of this proposal was published in the Feb. 2 Federal Register.

Farm Bureau to assess beef programs

WASHINGTON, D.C., — The American Farm Bureau Federation has announced plans to expand its efforts to strengthen the National Live Stock and Meat Board and the U.S. Meat Export Federation programs.

Noting the recent defeat of the beef referendum to determine whether producers wished to approve an assessment on the value of cattle sold to support a national Beef Research and Information Program, Robert B. Delano, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, said, "Beef producers have voiced their opinion with respect to collection of research and promotion funds for the industry through the type of program voted upon in February.

"This increases the need for the cattle industry to

support the research and domestic promotion programs carried out by the National Live Stock and Meat Board and the export-promotion program carried out by the U.S. Meat Export Federation.

"AFBF will continue to encourage more cattle producers and feeders market agencies, and meat packers to support the Meat Board program and encourage additional state Farm Bureaus to join the U.S. Meat Export Federation," Delano added.

Farm Bureau, the nation's largest farm organization, also will call a meeting of beef industry organizations to consider methods of working together to strengthen existing research and promotion programs, the farm leader said.

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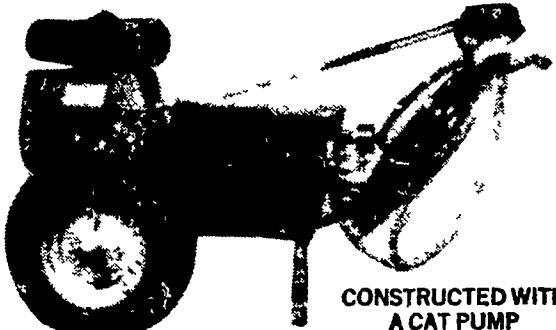
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