

Mirrors help streamline hog inspection

WASHINGTON, D.C. — To help fewer inspectors do the nation's meat inspection job more efficiently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is streamlining inspection requirements in hog slaughtering plants.

One result of the changes will be a reduction of about 110 inspector positions, Donald L. Houston, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, said. But, he said, these inspectors will be reassigned to other essential areas needing personnel.

Houston said the standards are being published as an interim

regulation, meaning they go into effect immediately, because current federal hiring restrictions create an immediate need for more efficient use of agency personnel.

However, the regulation will be reviewed at the close of the comment period on October 27.

With the new procedure, made possible by knowledge gained by meat inspectors over the years, today's inspectors can complete their examinations in less time, Houston said.

Aided by a mirror, the inspector can observe all sides of the carcass

without turning it. Further time savings will come from greater reliance on visual, rather than manual, inspection of the internal organs. For example, inspectors have learned that they need to observe and feel certain organs, while simply observing others is sufficient.

"Diseases of the spleen, for instances, such as tuberculosis or abscesses, are readily visible," Houston said. "Liver lesions are easy to see, and abscesses rarely are buried in swine liver as they frequently are in the much thicker liver of cattle."

Houston said in plants where the new procedures are used, three inspectors will be able to inspect up to 506 hogs per hour, compared to 337 per hour at present. Similar or higher gains in productivity are achievable in larger plants which have more inspectors.

"The new procedures will permit increased inspector productivity with no loss of effectiveness," said Houston. "The changes are based on improved inspection procedures."

"Present inspection procedures have been used since at least the early 1930s. Since that time, the incidence of diseases found during inspection has changed, and tests

indicate that more efficient procedures are just as effective in detecting current disease conditions."

The Federal Meat Inspection Act requires the inspection for wholesomeness of all meat sold in interstate and foreign commerce.

The interim regulation was published in the August 28 Federal Register. Comment must be sent

before October 27 to Food Safety and Inspection Service Hearing Clerk, Room 2637-South, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

A background paper is available from Food Safety and Inspection Service Information, Room 1160-South, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone (202) 447-9113.

Nat'l Broiler Housing Seminar set for Oct. 7

NEWARK, Del. — The 20th annual National Broiler Housing Seminar will be held October 7 at the University of Delaware Substation near Georgetown. Deadline for registration is September 25. The \$15 fee covers lunch, coffee and donuts, and a copy of the proceedings.

Subjects to be discussed during the seminar include an update on solar research projects at the Universities of Delaware and Maryland; factors affecting ammonia release in broiler houses; limited area brooding techniques; alternative construction designs—the flex house;

present and future housing in the South; a breakdown of construction costs; a report on the current status of the animal rights issue; and a report on the current status of retroactive investment tax credit legislation.

The meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. and adjourn at 3:15. It is sponsored jointly by the Delaware and Maryland Cooperative Extension Services and Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. For more information, contact Extension poultry specialist George Chaloupka at the Georgetown Substation 302/856-5250.

Farm Talk

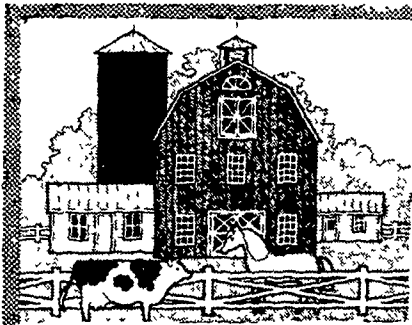
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Although biomass agriculture is a new phrase, it's an old concept. While scientists are now developing sophisticated methods of capturing and converting biomass energy, cavemen practiced the concept. For in its simplest form, the burning of wood to release solar energy for warmth, light and protection from hungry tigers was probably the first man-made use of biomass energy. This energy originates with the sun.

The complicated chemical process involved in plant production is all a part of biomass energy production. Man first converted it to his own use by

eating the plants. Then he burned them for heat, light, and protection. He then burned plant materials to kill insects, improve grasslands, clear fields, and shape weapons. Finally somebody struck oil and we entered the age of fossil fuel—a source that took millions of years to form and that will someday run out.

So now we go back to our earliest form of energy and start trying to answer a lot of questions that have been shelved for many years. No doubt some of these answers will put farmers in the forefront in the energy production race that is bound to occur during the next few decades.



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