

USDA takes closer look at imported, exported meats

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service has appointed a deputy administrator for international programs to strengthen and unify USDA's programs involving meat and poultry imports and exports.

"There is an urgent need to more sharply define and manage FSIS duties and responsibilities in the area of foreign operations" said Donald L. Houston, FSIS administrator. "Under this reorganization, we can more effectively meet our import in-

spection responsibilities and at the same time facilitate the development of expanded foreign markets for U.S. meat and poultry."

Houston assigned Dr. Victor H. Berry to the new position. Berry, a veterinarian, was formerly deputy administrator of meat and poultry

inspection operations. Dr. Ronald J. Prucha, a veterinarian who was formerly assistant deputy administrator for meat and poultry inspection operations, will serve as acting deputy administrator of meat and poultry inspection operations, overseeing the domestic inspection force.

Houston said the control and inspection of imported meat, which the foreign programs division oversees, has become a matter of growing concern and complexity during the last several years. Last August, FSIS inspectors discovered illegal shipments of horse and kangaroo meat from Australia which led to the impoundment of 66 million pounds of product from that country.

As recently as March 26, FSIS announced that four Costa Rican meat plants would be removed from the list of approved exporters to the United States because they

were shipping adulterated product to this country.

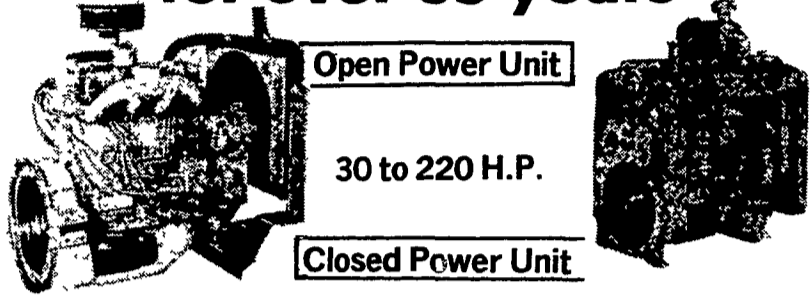
"These are just two highly visible instances where FSIS stepped in to ensure a safe and wholesome supply of imported meat for consumers," Houston said.

In addition to the foreign programs division, the export coordination staff and the veterinary attache will report to Berry. The export coordination staff provides assistance to the meat and poultry industry in meeting the exporting requirements of foreign markets.

This group has helped maintain and open foreign export markets for U.S. meat and poultry firms by overcoming trade restrictions based on unrealistic or unnecessary health and inspection requirements, Houston said.

The veterinary attache represents U.S. interests to the European Economic Community.

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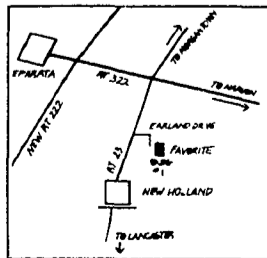
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