

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Commodity Credit Corporation

Sunshine Act Meeting; Correction

Note: This document replaces the meeting notice at 62 FR 54603 (October 21, 1997).

TIME AND DATE: 2:00 p.m., November 3, 1997.

PLACE: Room 104-A, Jamie Whitten Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

STATUS: Open.

MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Open Meeting of February 5, 1996.
2. Memorandum re: Update of Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)-Owned Inventory.
3. Memorandum re: Commodity Credit Corporation's (CCC's) Financial Condition Report.
4. Resolution re: Amendment of Bylaws of the Commodity Credit Corporation.
5. Resolution re: Termination of Obsolete CCC Board Dockets.
6. Resolution re: Amendment of Dockets Requiring Only a Change in Nomenclature.
7. Resolution re: Ratification of Commodities Available for Public Law 480 During Fiscal Year 1996.
8. Docket GCX-326 re: Market Access Program for Fiscal Year 1996 and Subsequent Years.
9. Docket CZ-266, Rev. 2, re: Operations Under Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act.
10. Docket CZ-332, Rev. 1, re: Food for Progress Program.
11. Docket CZ-161a, Rev. 8, re: Policies for Collection, Settlement, and Adjustment of Certain Claims By or Against the Commodity Credit Corporation.
12. Docket GCZ-136 re: Policy with Respect to Establishment of Valuation

Reserves Against Assets of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

13. Docket CZ-148, Rev. 4 re: Capital Fund Commitments and Control of Valuation Reserves Against Assets of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

14. Docket P-CON-96-02, re: Environmental Activities.

15. Docket P-CON-96-03, re: Delegating Authority for CCC Conservation Programs.

CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Juanita B. Daniels, Acting Secretary, Commodity Credit Corporation, Stop 0571, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-0571.

Dated: October 21, 1997.

Juanita B. Daniels,

Acting Secretary, Commodity Credit Corporation.

[FR Doc. 97-28466 Filed 10-22-97; 4:57 pm]

BILLING CODE 3410-05-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Farm Service Agency, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to request an extension of a currently approved information collection in support of the FSA Aerial Photography Program. The FSA Aerial Photography Field Office (APFO) uses the information from this form to collect the customer and photography information needed to produce and ship the various products ordered.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before December 26, 1997 to be assured consideration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR COMMENTS: Contact Linda McDonald, USDA, FSA, APFO, 2222 West 2300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84119-2020, telephone (801) 975-3500 Extension 235.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Request for Aerial Photography.
OMB Control Number: 0560-0176.

Expiration Date of Approval: October 31, 1997.

Type of Request: Extension of previously approved information collection.

Abstract: The information collected under Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number 0560-0176 as identified above, is needed to enable the Department of Agriculture to effectively administer the Aerial Photography Program.

APFO has the authority to coordinate aerial photography and remote sensing programs and the aerial photography flying contract programs.

The film secured by FSA is public domain and reproductions are available at cost to any customer with a need. All receipts from the sale of aerial photography products and services are retained by FSA.

The FSA-441, Request for Aerial Photography, is the form FSA supplies to its customers when placing an order for aerial photography products and services.

Estimate of Respondent Burden: Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to average 3.3 hours per response.

Respondents: Farmers, Ranchers and other USDA Customers who wish to purchase photography products and services.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 24,000.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondents: 1.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours on Respondents: 8,000 hours.

Proposed topics for comment include but are not limited to: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information from those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, OMB, Washington,

DC 20503, and to Linda McDonald, FSA, APFO, USDA, 2222 West 2300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84119-2020.

OMB is required to make a decision concerning the collection of information contained in these proposed regulations between 30 and 60 days after publication of this document in the **Federal Register**. Therefore, a comment to OMB is best assured of having its full effect if OMB receives it within 30 days of publication.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Signed at Washington, DC on October 19, 1997.

Bruce R. Weber,

Acting Administrator, Farm Service Agency.
[FR Doc. 97-28303 Filed 10-24-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-05-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Docket No. 97-057N]

Notice of Change in Inspection Procedures; Adoption of a Hands-off Inspection Procedure for Lambs

AGENCY: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In response to a request from the American Sheep Industry Association, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is changing its inspection procedures for lambs. Currently, inspectors palpate the carcasses of lambs for the purpose of detecting and removing carcasses with diseases such as Caseous lymphadenitis. Under the new procedure, there will be hands-off inspection of lambs in order to reduce the risk and hands-on inspection methods may spread or add microbial contamination to carcasses.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Alice Thaler, Chief, Concepts & Design Branch, Inspection Methods Development Division, Office of Policy, Program Development, and Evaluation, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250-3700; telephone, (202) 205-0005.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Traditionally, meat inspectors have palpated the carcasses of lambs as part of their post-mortem evaluation of these animals. The American Sheep Industry Association recommended that we end

this practice for food safety reasons. The primary justification for this long-standing hands-on inspection procedure was to detect and remove carcasses with diseases such as Caseous lymphadenitis.

In determining the desirability of such a procedure for lambs, FSIS considered two questions: (1) Will diseased carcasses of parts be more likely to reach consumers in a hands-off system?; and (2) Are current hands-on inspection methods likely to be spreading or adding contamination to carcasses?

Comparing Hands-on and Hands-off Procedures

The first issue deals with the benefits of a hands-on system. What is the risk that a diseased carcass or diseased parts would be passed for food and reach the consumer if FSIS instituted a hands-off inspection procedure?

The second issue was to determine whether current inspection techniques used on lambs cause inspectors to spread or add contamination to carcasses. Although there is no data on this specific question, we believe that data from other food handling and health care industries indicate that the hands-on procedures could contaminate lamb carcasses or spread such contamination.

Caseous lymphadenitis is the primary disease detected by carcass palpation, and it is not a public health concern. In the United States, there are six plants that slaughter 80 percent of the lambs. From Fiscal Years 1987 to 1996, these six plants slaughtered 26,347,480 lambs and yearlings. (Present data do not distinguish between lambs and yearlings.) The plants condemned 1,203 animals in the same 10-year period for Caseous lymphadenitis, a 0.0046 percent condemnation rate. It is unknown how many carcasses were detected on post-mortem and trimmed, and then passed for food.

Seven of the diseases routinely present in lambs are of public health concern: Actinobacillosis, Campylobacteriosis, Contagious ecthyma, Echinococcosis, Leptospirosis, Salmonella dysentery, and Toxoplasmosis. However, none of them require carcass palpation for diagnosis.

The American Sheep Industry Association believes that hands-on inspection methods spread or add contamination to carcasses, including pathogenic microorganisms such as *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7 and *Salmonella*. The Agency evaluated existing information to determine its adequacy and reviewed literature regarding the documented spread of contamination by hands in other industries. (See References at end of

document.) Evidence from other food handling and health care industries supports these concerns. (Gould and Ream 1996; Wenzel and Pulverer 1995). FSIS accepts the documentation in allied fields, which argues that the palpation of lamb carcasses is inconsistent with our food safety philosophy that FSIS must return carcasses presented for inspection with unchanged or lower food safety risk factors.

Conclusion

The primary reason for carcass palpation in lambs is to detect Caseous lymphadenitis. This disease is not in public health concern and has an extremely low condemnation rate. Although it has not been proven directly that palpation by inspectors causes microbial contamination or actually spreads such contamination, compelling evidence from allied industries indicates that hands do spread or add microorganisms. The risk of contamination using a hands-on procedure exceeds the risk of diseased carcasses being missed using a hands-off procedure for lambs.

Therefore, FSIS is proceeding to adopt a hands-off inspection method for lambs. This process involves a number of steps, including consultation with employee organizations. FSIS intends to complete the process within the next 12 months.

FSIS will monitor condemnation rates in the six plants to identify the impact, if any, of the change. Further, the Agency intends to look at the implications of hands-off inspection procedures with regard to the production of all meat and poultry products.

Done at Washington, DC, on October 17, 1997.

Thomas J. Billy,
Administrator.

References

1. Snider, O.P., Jr., HACCP—An Industry Food Safety Self-Control Program—Part VI, Dairy Food & Environ. Sanitation, June 1992; 12(6):362-365.
2. Almeida, R.C., Kuaye, A.Y., Serrano, A.M., de Almeida, P.F., Evaluation and Control of the Microbiological Quality of Hands in Food Handlers, Revista de Saude Publica (Brazil), Aug. 1995; 29(4):290-4.
3. Bell, R.G., Hathaway, S.C., The Hygienic Efficiency of Conventional and Inverted Lamb Dressing Systems. Journal of Applied Bacteriology (New Zealand). Sep. 1996; 81(3):225-34AB.
4. Gould, D., Ream, E., Nurses' Infection-control Practice: Hand Decontamination, the Use of Gloves and Sharp Instruments. International Journal of Nursing Studies (U.K.). Apr. 1996; 33(2):143-60AB.