

# Briarwood Farms

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**[Docket Nos. 1996P-0418, 1997P-0197, 1998P-0203, and 2000N-0504 and RIN# 0910-AC14.**

Dear Reviewers:

First, let me expression my gratitude to the Food and Drug Administration for considering my comments on the proposed *Salmonella* Enteritidis regulations. I currently am general manager of an egg producing/processing operation in Rochester, Washington. For some twenty years prior to this employment, I held a series of positions as a poultry Veterinarian including Assistant Professorship at Wash State University, represented an international chicken and turkey breeder and as chief veterinarian for a major poultry meat producer where my specialty was food safety. I have commented to the FDA several times previously. As an egg producer, we employ a number of practices and monitoring procedures to insure delivery of safe product to our customers. My previous experience in food safety has been beneficial to this egg production/processing.

FDA should review medical information from the Centers for Disease Control, which finds egg quality assurance programs have already made a difference wherever they have been used. Producers and states have been implementing these plans voluntarily, with no federal mandate.

Furthermore, FDA should consider that the "operational basis" of these egg quality plans already incorporate most of the core elements put forth in the proposed regulations. It is my opinion that these operating plans are successful because they are designed specifically to consider regional differences. The current proposal seems to offer a number of "one size fits all" regulations which are often financially unbearable nor do these concepts necessarily insure the lowest possible risk of SE [the agent that it was intended to minimize].

Considering these somewhat different approaches to a common well-intended goal, I offer the following comments and observations.

**Recognize and reward what states and the industry are already doing.** State plans are not only technically superior to mandated generalities but the crucial element of voluntary compliance has already been dealt by involving local stakeholders from the target population. A Federal mandate can only hope to be as successful if the "core" goals are stressed and the results monitored.

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1. **Carry out inspections and enforcement through federal and state agencies that already regulate our industry.** The Agricultural Marketing Service already inspects egg packing facilities four times a year under the Shell Egg Surveillance Program, often in cooperation with state agencies. AMS and the states are knowledgeable of the egg industry, and using them will avoid diverting FDA employees away from homeland security, import inspections and other work.

I would also suggest that FDA needs more input from scientists who are experts in egg and poultry husbandry. Again, I would stress that parts of this plan are not only impractical but would tend to increase total potential Salmonella problems.

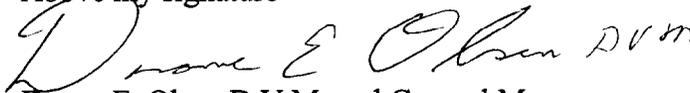
- **The proposed rule does nothing to encourage vaccination,** even though it is a highly effective means of controlling SE. Perhaps SE vaccination has gotten overlooked because the operative principal in SE vaccinating is often misunderstood. Live SE vaccination is competitive exclusion. We are simply exposing the chick to a non pathogenic [to humans] Salmonella bacterium. Admittedly several attenuation procedures are utilized; nearly all vaccination schedules evaluated provide some increased resistance to SE infection.
- **FDA does not give any indication whether it has surveyed existing laboratories to find out whether they can handle the increased testing workload** as a result of this proposed rule. As a former Head of a poultry diagnostic laboratory, I can assure you that this barrier to a successful program can be as hard to overcome as the acceptance of the plan by all individuals in target group. Laboratories are historically territorial and coordinating a number of labs to institute reliable testing capabilities would require a major effort.
- **FDA's requirement for a wet cleaning is unrealistic.** In winter months, this requirement is likely to come into conflict with EPA regulations to insure clean surface and grounds waters. While exclusionary regulations may be expected to occur as more agencies undertake regulatory programs without having full knowledge of the actual operation of egg producers, this one seems destined to conflict! One can readily envision multiple conflicts with the forthcoming Air Emissions Guidelines. FDA should take a pro-active position in this arena; mandate the result not the procedure.
- The scenario where established [even science based] practices have to be reprioritized in the light of improved methods or regulations has been a common occurrence in my career. Industry cherished methods of one decade have to be left behind as dictated by ever changing circumstances.
- **FDA's requirement that eggs held more than 36 hours be refrigerated at 45° F is also unrealistic and unnecessary.** This requirement could provide another opportunity for SE to increase in eggs bound for the table egg market. When such eggs are washed, there will be a higher incidence of thermal cracks, simply because of the sudden change in temperature. If this [or any process mandated in these regulations] serves to potentially

increase SE contamination, then monitoring becomes unreliable as a measure of success of the entire program.

- FDA should lengthen the 36-hour limit to a more realistic 72 hours. FDA should then require refrigeration at 55° F unless the eggs are held more than a week; then impose the 45° F requirement.
- **FDA's biosecurity requirements should be more flexible.** Biosecurity is important, but biosecurity is a specific plan for an individual site. Many elaborate biosecurity plans have been written and offered to many sites. Those which have actually been implemented are often a site specific plan developed by the production unit operators. Once again, stakeholder "input" is the element that gets a plan operational.. This factor likely ranks higher than costs in the success of a biosecurity plan.
- **Has FDA surveyed processors to see whether they are willing to accept eggs from SE-positive flocks?** Let's take a worst case scenario! Processors are not willing to assume the added risk of processing SE positive eggs [processors have liability too]. Now what do you do? Renderers tend to run from confirmed contamination. OK, let's bury all that biomass and in whose EPA/Dept of ecology landfill will we do so.. Even if an indemnity system is structured to give some relief to producers, someone still has to neutralize and dispose of contaminated eggs.

In closing, I repeat that my career has been dedicated to delivering safe poultry products to consumers. My commitment was made when I accepted my Veterinary degree. I have endeavored to follow many increasing regulations in the following years. My industry needs regulations that are flexible, reasonably applied, and scientifically based if we are to survive as a business. The producer ends up absorbing the majority of costs of regulations. I strongly urge you to consider the discussion offered above, so that these regulations can be workable for our industry.

Above my signature



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