

December 20, 2004

Division of Dockets Management  
Food and Drug Administration  
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061  
Rockville, MD 20852

[Docket Nos. 1996P-0418, 1997P-0197, 1998P-0203, and 2000N-0504]

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to comment on the Food and Drug Administration's proposed rule on *Salmonella* Enteritidis in shell eggs. I own a company which produces liquid eggs. Food safety is in my interest as a farmer, small business operator and consumer. Implementing these plans voluntarily with no federal mandate is to my advantage.

I am already regulated by many different federal and state agencies. Even when the aim of regulation is good, the burden of complying can be heavy, especially on farms and other small businesses. I respectfully urge FDA to minimize the additional burden in the following ways.

1. The FDA should thoroughly review all existing state and private egg quality assurance programs with the idea of incorporating these proven programs a part of proposed FDA regulations. Producers like me who voluntarily comply with one of these plans are then in compliance with FDA regulations.
2. Even though I am not a table egg producer I have a vested interest as taxpayer of minimizing inspection costs. The FSIS already inspects egg breaking facilities. FSIS 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 sciences. Several parts of the FDA proposal should be changed because they are either impractical, unnecessarily costly or in conflict with sound science.

- The proposed rule does not include vaccination, even though it is a highly effective means of controlling SE. An effective vaccination program, combined with a single environmental test shortly before depopulation would allow our birds to have protection and allow control of SE.

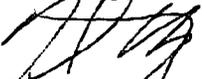
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- In our state, the laboratory system has not established a testing facility for SE. Before implementing the rule, FDA should survey public and private laboratories to assess whether lab capacity is adequate to test for SE. This survey would also apply for AI, and END as well.
- In winter months, it is not practical to wash our facilities. The birds have been removed which is the heat source, consequently the water lines will freeze. FDA should not impose a requirement that producers cannot carry out. FDA could make the wet cleaning optional, and require only a dry cleaning after an environmental positive. Vaccination could be used in conjunction with the dry cleaning thereby controlling the spread to a new flock.
- FDA's bio-security requirements should be more flexible. Bio-security is important. Some of the FDA requirements are not practical like the changing of clothes and shoes between houses. Our walkways are already constructed along the egg conveyor which travels through each house. The farm needs to establish its own bio-security steps.
- What is going to happen to these SE positive eggs? If the positive eggs could not be sold at any price, then the loss to producers would be much more than FDA has estimated. Has the FDA addressed this problem through an indemnity system, payable if producers have fully complied with the regulatory requirements?
- These requirements could cause further consolidation in our industry, with smaller operations unable to afford the additional labor and compliance costs. Our government yet always professes to be concerned about the increasing concentration in agriculture.

We are dedicated to produce an extremely safe product. We already comply with the laws and our product is ultimately pasteurized. We need regulations which are efficient and scientifically based to stay competitive and be the best stewards to the public. I strongly urge you to make the appropriate changes so this regulation can be workable for our industry.

Sincerely,



David Rettig

Rembrandt Enterprises, Inc.