

# Meat Messenger

## North Dakota State Meat Inspection Program

North Dakota Department of Agriculture

July 2002

### Edgeley Meat Plant Finds Widespread Success Under State Inspection Program



Left to right: Syd Renner, Larry Coon, Glen Fischer, Michelle Bullinger, and Barb Tazarex.

The Edgeley Meat Plant has undergone some major renovations during the past year. The addition of a new processing area, smokehouse, and cooler as well as various other improvements, were made so the meat processing facility could obtain official state status.

Larry & Kari Coon are the proud owners of the Edgeley Meat Plant in Edgeley, ND. The couple has owned and operated the successful plant for the past 10 years. They specialize in custom slaughter, retail, wholesale and deer processing. The plant employs four full-time and five part-time employees.

The Coons have found increased opportunities since becoming an official processing company November 1, 2001. The company has seen increases in sales and production. The plant is now supplying 9 different outlets, including Stop and Go's in Fargo and Jamestown and other convenience stores and grocery stores.

"I needed to go State to stay in business," Larry pointed out. "Our main objectives will be to grow and make more money."

The Edgeley meat plant carries about 125 different types of products that contain an array of ingredients and formulations. Larry said, "We do things other plants don't do; it adds some uniqueness to our products by doing this."

Besides the State Inspection Program, radio advertising, word of mouth, and reputation have all helped the plant gain more exposure and find new customers. Larry advertises, through personal interviews, about three times a week on a Jamestown radio station. The plant has seen a substantial increase in sales after its first year of advertising on the radio.

Coon has also recently purchased a refrigerated truck for transporting his products. "We will grow as we develop more outlets and hopefully hire some more employees in the process," explains Larry. In addition, the plant plans to add additional freezer space and to make some other renovations in the future.

Larry is very happy with what the State Program has helped him accomplish. "Inspection has made me a better processor. It has made me become more familiar with the products we produce and the procedures that go

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along with the formulations of our products.” Coon said. “It has made me realize issues that I have never thought of before and has given me a greater opportunity to market our products to different areas in the state.”

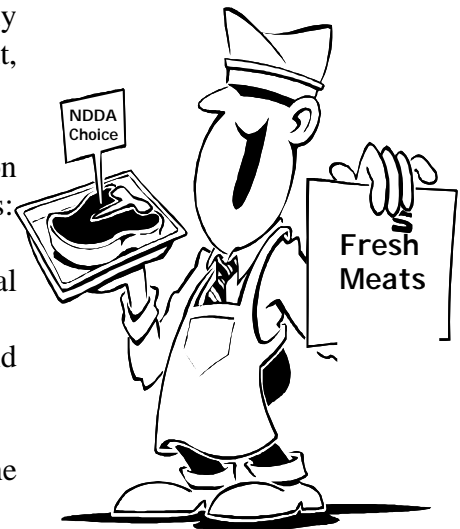
Larry would like to see the state institute a poultry inspection plan. He feels that poultry is a part of his business that he needs to reclaim and use as a tool to broaden his and other businesses.

## **Strong Turnout for Convention**

The 2002 North Dakota Meat Processors Convention was held April 12th and 13<sup>th</sup> at the Chieftain Conference Center in Carrington, ND. Many different plants from around the state were represented at the two day event, and they were treated to a variety of speakers and events.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture sponsored the Friday afternoon session of the convention, which consisted of four different presentations:

- Dr. Larry Schuler, State Veterinarian, spoke about foreign animal diseases and bioterrorism issues.
- Travis Maddock visited about adding value to certain meat cuts and consumer concerns.
- Lisa Lee gave a presentation about Beef Quality Assurance.
- Scott Burnett wrapped up the day’s events with a talk about the causes and control of Listeria.



The convention continued throughout the weekend with a product show, annual meeting and banquet. If you are interested in joining the North Dakota Meat Processors Association, please call Eileen Myers at 701-743-4451.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE ADDRESSES INTERSTATE MEAT SHIPMENT**

The National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection (NACMPI) endorsed interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry at their June meeting. The NACMPI acts as an advisory committee to the United States Secretary of Agriculture regarding product standards and labeling changes and other matters affecting federal and state inspection program activities.

The committee recommendations build on language contained in the 2002 farm bill regarding interstate meat shipment. The new farm bill directs USDA to include a full review of state inspection systems when the Secretary of Agriculture submits the annual report to Congress on the activities of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The language states that this review should also offer guidance about changes the state systems might expect should the statutory prohibition against the interstate shipment of state-inspected product be removed. NASDA worked with Sens. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), and other congressional offices to develop and add the provision to the farm bill.

Currently, interstate shipment of state inspected products is prohibited for amenable species. Non-amenable species, such as bison and elk, can be transported across state-lines under state inspection. If interstate shipment of meat and poultry products was allowed, all state inspected product could be sold from state to state.

## **Anthrax – A Reminder to be Vigilant**

In August 2000, a family from Rosseau County in northern Minnesota was exposed to anthrax. A local farmer found one of his cows recumbent and unable to rise. After consulting with his veterinarian, he killed the cow and proceeded to gut and skin the carcass. The carcass was processed by a custom plant and consumed by the farmer's family on three occasions within ten days. After this time, the farmer found five dead cattle in the same pasture where he had found the downer. His veterinarian collected some samples for laboratory analysis, and the cows were diagnosed as having anthrax.

To investigate the possibility of the consumed animal also being infected with anthrax, the family members were interviewed and samples of meat products from the carcass were collected for testing. Two of the six family members had symptoms which were consistent with gastrointestinal anthrax infection. The carcass samples were found to contain high numbers of anthrax organisms. Fortunately, the family involved was identified and treated early enough so no serious illnesses or deaths occurred.

The custom processing plant was contacted and told to hold all meat processed after the infected carcass. Seven carcasses had been processed in the meantime. Owners of the meat from these carcasses were asked to return the meat products to a central location for incineration. All meat products were accounted for and destroyed. Two of the seven livestock owners sued the plant owner to recover the cost of the meat. Both of these suits were eventually dismissed.

This case brings to mind the importance of being vigilant and responsible for what comes into your plant. Since the slaughter and processing of animals is not performed under inspection at custom plants, the health of each animal is generally assumed to be the customer's responsibility. However, the plant is responsible for the carcasses and products within the facility and for avoiding contamination of facilities. To help avoid a situation like the one above, these guidelines should be followed:

### When the animal has been slaughtered on the farm

- Ask how the animal died. If it died other than by intentional slaughter, be suspicious and ask questions. If it was slaughtered, make sure the animal was healthy. If there was something wrong with it, question the animal owner about any symptoms and consider contacting a veterinarian.

### When the animal comes in live for slaughter

- Be familiar with symptoms of anthrax. If you have concerns or questions, contact your local veterinarian or a veterinarian from the ND Department of Agriculture. The ND Department of Agriculture has three veterinarians, the State Veterinarian and the Deputy State Veterinarian with the Board of Animal Health.

### In all situations

- Be aware of the time of year anthrax normally causes disease in your area (In ND it is most common in July or August).
- Be aware of your geographical location and the anthrax hot spots. (In ND, anthrax is especially common in the Sheyenne River Valley, but it has been found in almost every county in the state).
- Know or ask for historical data (Has the farm had infections in the past? Since anthrax organisms survive in the soil, one diagnosed case usually means an increased risk for that location).

\*There was an outbreak of anthrax in ND during the summer of 2000. Fifty-three farms reported anthrax infections and a total of 180 animals died. In 2001, there was one farm with 11 animals that died.

## Equipment For Sale

Cas Label Printer - Model LP-1000, 4 years old

Sanitary Meat Tenderizer

Label Machine and Scale - Jay Model 1130 and NCL Electric Scale

Call Larry at Edgeley Meat Plant.  
800-235-6328

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Call Ron at the Butcher Block, Oakes, ND.  
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