

Meat Messenger

North Dakota State Meat Inspection Program

North Dakota Department of Agriculture

April 2005

Branded Meat: Potential Profits for Meat Processors

By Vawrita Best

The U.S. consumer lives in a 'branded' world where reliable quality is expected. From the vehicles we drive to the clothes we wear, we have specific expectations about our consumable products. This brand recognition is expanding into the food we consume as well.

For over a decade we have heard the talk about the 'farm to fork' concept. That concept is now expanding to a 'value added' business plan. The industry, in an effort to connect with the consumer, has developed this farm to fork concept where each segment in the industry is producing and consuming the same thing...MEAT!

In the past, the rancher was producing pounds of live animal without regard for quality. The feedlot was producing pounds of live animal without regard for cutability. The packing house was producing pounds of carcasses without regard for leanness. The wholesaler/retailer was producing whole steaks, roasts, burger, and sausage without regard for consistency. Consumers were producing meals that they expected to be consistently safe, wholesome and of assured quality.

Without a common goal throughout all segments of the meat industry, the consumers' expectations were not being met. With a push in recent years to meet consumer expectation, numerous 'branded' meat programs have established adding to customer assurance and loyalty and in turn, monetary premiums for the various segments of the industry.

In the past 15 to 20 years, there has also been a push by consumers for source verification of their food, especially meats and vegetables. Along with the above referenced branded beef programs, the State of South Dakota last month passed a law that will implement a voluntary 'South Dakota branded meat program'. Components of the program require traceability of the MEAT product from farm to fork.

There is also a proposed bill currently in the 2005 North Dakota legislative session that reads:

"North Dakota certified beef program. The agriculture commissioner is directed to coordinate with the state board of animal health, the North Dakota stockmen's association, North Dakota state university beef systems center of excellence, and the United States department of agriculture in developing a North Dakota source-verified and process-verified beef marketing program."

There are many sides to COOL (Country of Origin Labeling). The South Dakota law and the North Dakota proposed legislation take different approaches to voluntary enrollment in source verification. The goal is that over time, a source verified program can add value to all segments of the meat industry in the state, and consumers can enjoy a safe, wholesome, quality assured product that was born, fed, slaughtered, processed and retailed in North Dakota.

If your establishment is interested in exploring marketing opportunities of 'branded source verified' meat products, please contact Bobbi Talmadge at the North Dakota Department of Agriculture at 1-800-242-7535 or 701-328-4159.



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S.D. Governor Signs Branded Beef Law

By the Associated Press

Consumers will be able to find out where the beef they buy came from, even the ranch where a calf was born, under a new measure signed into law March 8 by Gov. Mike Rounds and aimed at raising cattle prices for the state's farmers and ranchers.

The South Dakota Certified Beef Program allows consumers to visit an Internet site and use a code on the meat label to track the animal from birth, through a feedlot and to a meatpacking plant. "We believe consumers will step forward and they will be paying premium prices for this premium product," Rounds said. The Legislature last week passed a bill based on the program Rounds first proposed when he campaigned for governor in 2002.

Various organizations have promoted high quality beef, but South Dakota officials said the state program marks the first time a government has put its seal of approval on beef products.

Only meat from South Dakota cattle that are tracked electronically and raised according to program standards would qualify for an official state trademark or seal, which features an image of Mount Rushmore National Memorial. State officials hope the program will improve cattle prices for South Dakota farmers and ranchers by assuring customers that the steak, roast and hamburger is of the highest quality and safety.

Congress a few years ago passed a law requiring that meat be labeled according to its country of origin, but the law has never been implemented. After the discovery of mad cow disease in a few cattle from Canada, consumers will demand more information about how and where meat was produced, South Dakota officials said. "We're going beyond country of origin labeling here. We're going right down to the producer who raised that calf," Rounds said.

Cattle in the program would have to be raised, fed and slaughtered within South Dakota. Farmers, ranchers and processors who join the program would have to follow state standards in raising and slaughtering cattle. All cattle in the program would carry electronic ID tags.

Rounds also signed into law a second measure that allows the state to start an identification program that will work in conjunction with the South Dakota Certified Beef program and also be used to help stop the spread of livestock diseases. Farmers and ranchers who voluntarily enroll in the Certified Beef program would have to pay licensing fees, which would be used to finance marketing efforts and monitoring of the livestock. Enrollees would be required to keep careful records that the state could check to ensure adherence to the program.

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The program initially will market premium beef products, but it eventually will distribute natural beef products from cattle that have been raised without certain hormones or drugs. Rounds said the natural beef products could sell particularly well in Europe. State Agriculture Secretary Larry Gabriel said the beef branding program should improve agricultural income by switching farmers and ranchers away from producing a raw commodity to selling a branded product. “I think this is a big step in revolutionizing the way we market our products,” said Gabriel, who owns a ranch in western South Dakota.

The program should increase the number of calves born in South Dakota and the number of cattle fed and slaughtered in the state, officials said. Gabriel said 850 farmers and ranchers have expressed interest in the program. Dwight Scott, the first farmer to register for the program last year, said he now signs an affidavit assuring buyers his cattle have been raised a certain way. The new program will certify those claims and back them up with records, he said.

Branded Meat Programs Contact List

American Foods Group	www.american-foods.com/profile.html	PM Beef	www.pmholdings.com/b.html
Certified Angus Beef	www.certifiedangusbeef.com/	Premium Standard Farms	www.psfarms.com/index.html
Creekstone Farms	www.creekstonefarmspremiumbeef.com/	Tyson/IBP	www.tysonfoodsinc.com/
Del Monte	www.delmonte.com/	Sysco	www.sysco.com/
Excel Corp.	www.sterlingsilvermeats.com/	Premium Gold	www.lobels.com/index_lobels.htm
Nolan Ryan's All Natural	www.nolanryanbeef.com/	Oregon Trail	www.oregontrailbeef.com/

Water Supply Requirements for Meat Processing Establishments

By Dr. Andrea Grondahl

Water plays an integral role in the meat processing environment. From washing down carcasses to being used as an additive, it can greatly impact the quality and safety of meat products. Wells and public water supplies cannot deliver a guarantee of public health safety because of their potential to contain contaminants. For these reasons, you need to pay special attention to water safety and quality, as it may have a direct and immediate impact on the success of your business.

The North Department of Agriculture (NDDA) has adopted Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 416 as one of the applicable regulations of the meat inspection program. This regulation applies to officially inspected establishments (state and federal) as well as custom exempt establishments. The section that addresses water supply states the following:

§ 416.2 Establishment grounds and facilities.

*(g) *Water supply and water, ice, and solution reuse.*

(1) A supply of running water that complies with the National Primary Drinking Water regulations (40 CFR

part 141), at a suitable temperature and under pressure as needed, must be provided in all areas where required (for processing product, for cleaning rooms and equipment, utensils, and packaging materials, for employee sanitary facilities, etc.). If an establishment uses a municipal water supply, it must make available to FSIS, upon request, a water report, issued under the authority of the State or local health agency,

certifying or attesting to the potability of the water supply. If an establishment uses a private well for its water supply, it must make available to FSIS, upon request, documentation certifying the potability of the water supply that has been renewed at least semi-annually. *[For official state establishments and custom exempt establishments “FSIS” is replaced with “NDDA”.]



Potability of water is determined by testing for coliform bacteria, which is found in the intestinal tract and waste of animals, as well as in soil and vegetation. Coliform bacteria usually do not cause disease, but their presence indicates that the water may contain other organisms that do cause disease.

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If your municipal water supply is found to be contaminated it is the responsibility of the operator of that water supply system to correct the problem. However, if you have a private well system and receive results that indicate it is positive for coliforms, it is your responsibility. You must take immediate action to address product safety. If you think the result might be a “false positive” you may collect another sample to verify. Alternatively, you may accept the results and disinfect your well (see “Private Well Systems – Maintenance and Treatment”). In either case you must verify that your water is safe before you continue to slaughter livestock or process meat products. In the event of a true positive or verified positive test result, you will need to conduct follow-up testing to ensure the problem has been corrected (see “Private Well Testing”).

Private Well Testing

By Dr. Andrea Grondahl

Meat processing establishments utilizing private wells must test their water supply for potability (suitable for drinking) at least twice yearly. Additionally, any samples testing positive must have follow-up tests completed after the well has been treated or sanitized. For the first follow-up test, the water system must be thoroughly flushed to remove all chlorine before the sample is collected. A second follow-up test should be completed approximately three months after the well has been treated to ensure the contamination problem has been resolved.

When collecting a water sample, it is important to use the proper procedures in order to avoid “false positives”. Contact one of the laboratories listed below to perform the test and to obtain a special sample container. Once you have the container, follow these steps;

- Choose a fixed faucet site for sampling (do not use swing faucets).
- Prior to collecting the sample, flush out the system by letting the water run at full force for at least two minutes.
- When you are ready to collect the sample, reduce flow to about half of full force. Do not overfill bottle so that water runs over the top. Place cap on sample immediately (sample should have minimal exposure to air).
- Send sample to the laboratory as soon as possible.

Laboratories Certified for Water Testing

Astro-Chem Lab, Inc.
4102 Second Ave. West
PO Box 972
Williston, ND 58801
(701) 572-7355

Fargo Cass Public Health
401 Third Ave. North
Fargo, ND 58102
(701) 241-1360

North Dakota Department of Health
Division of Microbiology
1205 Avenue A West
PO Box 5520
Bismarck, ND 58506-5520
(701) 328-5262

First District Health Unit
801 11th Ave. SW
PO Box 1268
Minot, ND 58702
(701) 852-1376

Minnesota Valley Testing Laboratories
1411 South 12th Street
Bismarck, ND 58504
(701) 258-9720 or
(800) 279-6885

Southwestern District Health Unit
2869 3rd Ave. West
Dickinson, ND 58601
(701) 227-0171

Private Well Systems – Maintenance and Treatment

By Dr. Andrea Grondahl

If the water source in your meat processing establishment is through a private well, you alone are responsible for maintaining the safety of your water supply. Periodic maintenance is necessary to keep your water safe and will help to produce negative results on your sampling tests.

Spring is a great time to check your well and the area around it. Make sure that surface water runoff is not puddling around the well and prevent any surface water from seeping down the sides of your well. Make sure your well cap is not cracked and is tightly secured. Most well contamination problems are caused by a poor fitting well cap or a break in the seal. If your well is more than 20 years old, have it inspected by a county health department sanitarian or a qualified well driller to make sure that the casing is not cracked or corroded.

Your well should be disinfected with a chlorine solution at least annually, any time work is done on the well or pump or if your water tests positive for coliforms. Contact your local health department for disinfection instructions specific to your establishment and well system.

For additional information on private well systems, contact your local health district or the North Dakota Department of Health Division of Water Quality at (701) 328-5210.

Procedure For Disinfection of Well Water Distribution Systems

Disinfection may be accomplished by the use of ordinary household bleach containing chlorine. For the average home well, one to two gallons of bleach will be adequate. Be sure to use regular bleach, not “lemon scented” or other modified bleach products. It is important to remember that even after the well has been disinfected, the water supply is not considered safe until a satisfactory laboratory report has been received.

Disinfection procedure:

1. Check the well seal to be certain of a tight-fitting construction. Replace any worn or damaged parts. A well must be in good condition to prevent contamination.
2. Mix a gallon or two of bleach in a bucket with three or four gallons of water. Water drawn from the contaminated well is satisfactory. Pour the solution directly into the well. Run a garden hose into the well and recirculate the water until you smell the bleach in the water coming out of the hose. Check again to see that the well seal is in good order before closing the well.
3. Turn on each water faucet successively throughout the entire distribution system and let the water run until you smell bleach at each tap.
4. Turn off the taps and allow the solution to remain in the water lines for at least two hours. Then run each tap for ten seconds and close again and allow to stand overnight. The water should not be used except for flushing toilets.
5. On the following morning:
 - a. Connect a garden hose to an outside water faucet and run the water into a road ditch until the disinfectant odor disappears. Then run each tap inside the house to rid the system of any lingering disinfectant.
 - b. Run each tap until the disinfectant odor disappears.
6. After two days and if the odor of bleach is not detected, re-test your water. It is also recommended that you have the water tested again about two weeks after chlorinating the system to assure that the contamination problem is eliminated. Boil all drinking water for 5 minutes or use bottled water until a satisfactory lab report has been received. Water may also be made safe for drinking by putting 5 drops of unscented bleach into each gallon of water. Let the water stand for 30 minutes before drinking. This method should be used only with water that is clean in appearance and free of odor.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Publishes Poultry Rule

By Dr. Andrea Grondahl

On March 14, 2005, FSIS published a rule in the Federal Register amending the poultry product inspection regulations regarding the designation of North Dakota under the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA). In 1971, the designation specified that the U.S. Department of Agriculture is responsible for providing poultry products inspection at eligible establishments in North Dakota and for enforcing provisions under the PPIA with respect to intrastate activities. Since 1971, USDA has provided inspection to all eligible poultry facilities in the state.

This proposed rule states that effective November 8, 2004, North Dakota will be in a position to administer a state poultry inspection program that includes requirements that are at least equal to those imposed under the federal poultry products inspection program for poultry and poultry products distributed in interstate commerce.

This is a proposed rule with a thirty day comment period. Once the comment period has elapsed, FSIS will publish a final rule and a state poultry program will be implemented. FSIS invites interested persons to submit comments on this proposed rule. Comments must be received on or before April 13, 2005. All comments submitted in response to this proposed rule, as well as research and background information used by FSIS in developing this document, will be available at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations & policies/2005 Proposed Rules Index/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_and_policies/2005_Proposed_Rules_Index/).

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Rich for more details and
pricing. 701-488-2690 or
541-2795.