

**Animal Health and International Trade
Committee Report**

2009 NIAA Annual Meeting

Wednesday, April 1, 2009



The Animal Health and International Trade Committee met on Wednesday, April 1, 2009 from 8:00 am to 12:15 pm EDT, during the 2009 NIAA Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky with 41 people present. Dr. David Harlan, Ph.D., served as the Chair, and Ms. Marcine Moldenhauer served as the Vice Chair.

The committee session focused on the Full Chain View of Food Safety, Animal Health and Meat Production. The following speakers presented relevant information pertaining to:

Scott Goltry, American Meat Institute, presented “Safe Meat Supply: Past, present, future.” Scott’s presentation focused on the improvements made at the packer level which have reduced Salmonella, Listeria and *E. coli* O157 prevalence in meat products to the point where foodborne illnesses related are flat, year over year and are approaching CDC’s target of 1 in 100K. This improvement was made by implementing HACCP and other quality programs which focus on threat evaluation and mitigation. However, when problems occur, consumers receive much of their information from the TV and Internet which magnifies the fear of foodborne illness well in excess of the actual risk. In response to consumer pressures (and technology industry marketing), Congress may create a single food safety agency, requiring traceability and HACCP to reach all the way to the farm (9 CFR 417.2).

Major Message: Get the message out to Congress to incorporate science and risk analysis into policy decisions.

Action: Scott will provide a report for the NIAA members.

Dr. Ronan Loftus, IdentiGEN, presented “Traceability: Industry threat or value-add?” Traceability cost, breadth, scope and precision should be determined by the actual compliance, food safety or consumer driven requirements. Europe, Japan, and Korea all require traceability. Korea requires DNA sampling. Ireland experienced a major contamination incident related to dioxin in beef and pork. The beef supply chain traceability program was effective in minimizing the impact of the problem, but the pork traceability program utterly failed. Key stats: 91.3% of consumers prefer traceable meat, 68% of consumers include meat quality as a factor in where they shop, 40% say it’s a major factor.

Major Message: DNA traceability can be used to pinpoint the source of meat to the actual animal, even after cooking. With increases in volume, this method may be cost effective in the near future.

Jon Caspers, United States Meat Export Federation, presented “Food Safety Challenges for Meat Exports Now and in the Future.” Since 2003, BSE cost the US beef industry over \$10B, 12% reduction of its market, and \$133 per head. By comparison, pork in 2008 added \$42 per head in value by exporting 25% of its production. In the US we use process controls to manage risk. Europe and Asia use command and control—testing and sanctions for non-compliance. Zero tolerance for pathogens with no testing transparency is major issues in China and Russia. Acceptable residue levels for animal health medications, pesticides and herbicides, growth promoting agents, and environmental contaminants (copper, dioxin) vary from country to country. Cut-out from one animal is distributed to many countries. To date the packer has borne the risk. Produce to the most stringent spec.

Major Message: Producers need to be aware that since animals (in part or whole) can (and are) exported all over the world, the tightest MRLs will drive withdrawal periods and approved treatments and practices. See www.mrldatabase.com

Bill Price, IGA Supermarkets, presented “Retailer Perspective on COOL, Food Safety and Consumer Demand for Meat Products.” COOL was similar to Y2K initially. Many labels were sent out from Sav A Lot but ended up unused. COOL ended up being simpler than what they thought, and consumer response has been minimal. Retailers are looking for more clarification around multi-country origin. Record keeping cost \$641 million the first year, to all parties, according to Congress. In his view, the cost does not justify the benefits. *Food Safety:* Consumer confidence returned to 81% last year, up from 66% — an 18-year low in 2007. When there is a recall, 81% turn to non-government sources. Over 75% of shoppers believe that the threat is greater than in the past. Media coverage is a driver — hype is not reality. We all have a stake in Food Safety. Once consumer confidence is gone, sales declines follow. *Consumer trends of buying habits today vs. 1970’s:* There’s been an increase in the number of females in the work force. There has also been a decrease in baking ingredients and increases in frozen meals and fresh produce. Drivers of behavior include rising costs and shrinking incomes. More consumers are eating at home because it is “healthier and cheaper.” 28% of consumers do not know what they will eat 2 hours before dinner. 41% of consumers said they are very concerned about nutrition. Retailers need to be careful about self-fulfilling prophecies. In the 1980’s they cut the meat counter due to bad press around red meat. In reality, consumers shifted to the stores that maintained a customer-focused meat counter. Recently he saw sales at one store’s meat department double with the return of an experienced butcher. *Stats:* Sunday is now the biggest shopping day, 5-9 pm during the week is the busiest time; demand for meat at retail is increasing >5%. **Major trend: Value, Value, Value!**

Major Message: If the goal is to increase meat consumption and the value of lesser cuts, increasing the supply, knowledge and skill of the meat department in retailers is critical and should be supported by the meat/livestock industry.

Dr. Thomas J. Myers, USDA/APHIS/VS, presented “Regionalization and Compartmentalization as Tools to Minimize Impacts of Disease.” *Zoning:* Dr Myers clearly defined “zoning” and described applications for zoning and the process to develop internationally approved zones. The zoning process (includes risk analysis, then regulation and is added to the CFR) is a lengthy process — 2 to 3 years. Dr. Myers reviewed the 11 zoning factors which are covered in the CFR. APHIS uses the OIE recommended format for risk assessment. During the risk assessment they have the option to either open a market with mitigations or discontinue evaluation. The example covered was the Patagonia South region in Argentina which has been FMD free since 1976. House and Senate bills were introduced to oppose importation; neither bill left Committee. Restrictions would apply to imports. Before recognition is approved by Congress, APHIS will prepare a complete report on the zoning process.

Compartmentalization: Compartmentalization is the OIE mechanism for recognition of non-geographic disease status. Actively work to add this capability to APHIS. OIE defines a compartment as establishments under a biosecurity program rather than geography. This is designed for companies rather than regions, for example a primary breeder in the poultry industry. If the breeder has eliminated disease from a flock and maintained a high biosecurity environment, they could make the case that they are free of specific diseases. Compartments should be established prior to an outbreak since resources will be unavailable during an outbreak.

Major Message: What is the mechanism for the USDA to create and certify compartments? This will have a major impact on organizations that are part of the NIAA; this should be explored more thoroughly.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- No new resolutions were accepted.
- One existing resolution was amended, revised, or removed:
 - 14. Zoning and Compartmentalization Cooperative Guidelines

Committee Session adjourned at 12:22 pm EDT.