



November 29, 2021

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Mr. Terry Bittner, Owner
Chenoa Locker, Inc.
Est. M20855
North Veto Street, P.O. Box 31
Chenoa, IL 61726

NOTICE OF SUSPENSION

Dear Mr. Bittner:

This letter confirms verbal notification provided to you by Dr. Donald Fickey, District Manager, on November 29, 2021, at approximately 0907 hours CST, of the Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) decision to suspend the assignment of inspection program personnel from your slaughter process at Chenoa Locker, Inc., establishment M20855, located at North Veto Street in Chenoa, Illinois. This action is based on your establishment's failure to effectively implement humane methods of slaughtering and handling animals in a manner that complies with the regulatory requirements prescribed by the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA). Your establishment is in violation of Title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations (9 CFR) Sections 313.15(a)(1) and 313.15(b)(1)(iv). The Rules of Practice, 9 CFR 500.3(b), specify that FSIS may issue a suspension without providing prior notification if an establishment is handling or slaughtering animals inhumanely.

Background and Authority

The Federal Meat Inspection Act 21 U.S.C. 603 Sec. 3 (b) states, "*for the purpose of preventing the inhumane slaughtering of livestock, the Secretary shall cause to be made, by inspectors appointed for that purpose, an examination and inspection of the method by which cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, or other equines are slaughtered and handled in connection with slaughter in the slaughtering establishments inspected under this Act. The Secretary may refuse to provide inspection to a new slaughtering establishment or may cause inspection to be temporarily suspended at a slaughtering establishment if the Secretary finds that any cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, or other equines have been slaughtered or handled in connection with slaughter at such establishment by any method not in accordance with Sections 1901 to 1906 of Title 7 until the establishment furnishes assurances satisfactory to the Secretary that all slaughtering and handling in connection with slaughter of livestock shall be in accordance with such a method.*" In addition, under prohibited acts 21 U.S.C. 610 sec 10 (b), "*No person, establishment or corporation shall, with the respect to any cattle, sheep, swine, goats, horses, mules, and other equines, or any carcasses, parts of carcasses, meat or meat food products of any such animals slaughter or handle in connection with slaughter any such animals in any manner not in accordance with sections 1901 to 1906 of Title 7.*"

Humane Methods of Slaughter Act 7 USC 1901 states, "*The Congress finds that the use of humane methods in the slaughter of livestock prevents needless suffering; results in safer and better working conditions for persons engaged in the slaughtering industry; brings about improvement of products and economies in*

slaughtering operations; and produces other benefits for producers, processors, and consumers which tend to expedite an orderly flow of livestock and livestock products in interstate and foreign commerce. It is the policy of the United States that the slaughtering of livestock and the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter shall be carried out only by humane methods.”

The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act 7 USC 1902 states, “No method of slaughtering or handling in connection with slaughtering shall be deemed to comply with the public policy of the United States unless it is humane.” When an egregious situation exists, FSIS can refuse to render inspection and indefinitely withdraw inspection from an establishment provided the establishment is afforded the right to an administrative hearing.

Under the authority of the above Acts, FSIS has prescribed rules and regulations for establishments producing meat and poultry products to include the humane slaughter of livestock as required by 9 CFR 313, and other matters. FSIS has also developed Rules of Practice regarding enforcement, which can be found in 9 CFR 500. The Rules of Practice describe the types of enforcement actions that FSIS may take to include a withholding action and/or suspension, with or without prior notification, and for filing a complaint to withdraw a Grant of Federal Inspection.

Findings/Basis for Action

On November 29, 2021, at approximately 0700 hours CST, the Illinois Dept. of Agriculture Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI) informed establishment personnel that slaughter operations could begin when the following occurred. The stunning operator attempted to stun a beef cow that had been restrained in the head catch of the knock box. The first attempt using a hand-held captive bolt gun failed to render the animal insensible, and the cow remained standing, looking around, and bellowed. You then took the captive bolt gun, reloaded it, and attempted to stun the cow. This second attempt failed to render the animal insensible, and the cow remained standing and bellowed. You made three more attempts to stun the cow with the captive bolt gun, each time reloading the device after the attempts failed to render the animal insensible and the animal remained standing until the sixth stunning attempt with the captive bolt gun rendered the animal insensible. You were notified that regulatory control was being taken, and the knock box was tagged with U.S. Rejected tag no. B-45 191911.

The occurrence of this inhumane handling incident constitutes an egregious violation of the humane handling requirements and is a violation of 21 U.S.C. 603, Section 3 (b) of the FMIA, and Sections 7 U.S.C. 1901 and 1902 of the HMSA of 1978.

You have failed to meet the requirements of 9 CFR 313.15(a)(1) which states, “The captive bolt stunners shall be applied to the livestock in accordance with this section so as to produce immediate unconsciousness in the animals before they are shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut. The animals shall be stunned in such a manner that they will be rendered unconscious with a minimum of excitement and discomfort,” and 9 CFR 313.15(b)(1)(iv) which states in part, “The stunning operation is an exacting procedure and requires a well-trained and experienced operator. He must be able to accurately place the stunning instrument to produce immediate unconsciousness.”

Summary and Conclusion

On September 9, 2004, FSIS published "Humane Handling and Slaughter Requirements and the Merits of a Systematic Approach to Meet Such Requirements" in the Federal Register Notice (54 Fed. Reg. 54625). On September 24, 2020, FSIS released FSIS Directive 6900.2 Revision 3, entitled, "Humane Handling and Slaughter of Livestock." Additionally, on October 23, 2013, FSIS introduced new guidance, titled "FSIS Compliance Guide for a Systematic Approach to the Humane Handling of Livestock." Within the guidance

material is information intended to better ensure the humane treatment of livestock presented for slaughter. The guidance material provides a set of practices designed to minimize excitement, discomfort, and accidental injury regarding the humane handling of livestock to include the four components of a robust systematic approach to humane handling.

In cases where an egregious animal handling incident is observed by FSIS inspection program personnel (IPP), the Agency provides for regulatory discretion in the decision of the type of enforcement action issued if an establishment maintains a written systematic approach that meets the criteria for robustness. You do not maintain a robust animal welfare program; therefore, regulatory discretion was not provided and a suspension is warranted.

Please provide this office with a written response to address the regulatory issues identified within this letter. At a minimum, your corrective actions should address the following:

1. Identify the specific reason(s) why the events described occurred.
2. Describe the specific action(s) that will be implemented to eliminate the cause of the incident and prevent future recurrences.
3. Describe the specific future monitoring activity or activities that your establishment will employ to ensure the actions implemented are effective.
4. Provide any supporting documentation and records maintained and associated with your proposed corrective actions and preventive measures.

Your proposed corrective actions and preventive measures should include any times and/or dates for completion of these proposed activities.

Please also be advised that you have the right to appeal this matter. If you wish to appeal this determination, you should contact:

Melissa Moore
Executive Associate for Regulatory Operations
Office of Field Operations
Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA
1400 Independence Ave. SW
South Building Room 3159
Washington, DC 20250
Cell: (202) 450-0330
melissa.moore1@usda.gov

In addition, you may also request a hearing regarding this determination pursuant to FSIS' Rules of Practice (9 CFR Part 500). The Rules of Practice were published in the Federal Register, Vol. 64, No. 228, on November 29, 1999. As specified in Section 500.5(d), should you request a hearing, FSIS will file a complaint that will include a request for an expedited hearing. If you wish to request a hearing regarding this determination, you should contact:

Scott C. Safian, Branch Chief
Enforcement Operations Branch
Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit
Food Safety and Inspection Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Stop Code 3753, PP3, Cubicle 9-235-A

1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250
Voice: (202) 418-8872
Fax: (202) 245-5097

If you have questions regarding this matter, you may contact (b) (6) [REDACTED]
or you may contact this office at (630) 620-7474 or by fax at (630) 620-7599.

Sincerely,

DONALD Digitally signed by
DONALD FICKEY
FICKEY Date: 2021.11.29
11:18:24 -06'00'

Dr. Donald B. Fickey
District Manager
FSIS Chicago District