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2004

Manure Matters, Volume 10, Number 3

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Manure Matters

UNL's Livestock
Environmental
Issues Committee
Includes
representation from
UNL, Nebraska
Department of
Environmental
Quality, Natural
Resources
Conservation Service,
Natural Resources
Districts, Center for
Rural Affairs,
Nebraska Cattlemen,
USDA Ag Research
Services, and
Nebraska Pork
Producers
Association.

Volume 10, Number 3

New BSE Rule Will Change Re-Feeding of Poultry Litter to Ruminants

Source: FDA Press Release, Author Unknown

The following is an excerpt of an FDA Press Release dated January 26, 2004

The Food and Drug Administration announced on January 26, 2004 several new public health measures, to be implemented, to strengthen significantly the multiple existing firewalls that protect Americans from exposure to the agent thought to cause bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, also known as mad cow disease) and that help prevent the spread of BSE in U.S. cattle. One of those changes will impact how re-feeding of waste to animals is allowed.

To implement these new protections, FDA will publish two interim final rules that will take effect immediately upon publication, although there will be an opportunity for public comment after publication.

The first interim final rule will ban the following materials from FDA-regulated human food, (including dietary supplements) and cosmetics:

- Any material from "downer" cattle. ("Downer" cattle are animals that cannot walk.)
- Any material from "dead" cattle. ("Dead" cattle are cattle that die on the farm i.e., before reaching the slaughter plant);

- Specified Risk Materials (SRM's) that are known to harbor the highest concentrations of the infectious agent for BSE, such as the brain, skull, eyes, and spinal cord of cattle, regardless of their age or health; and
- the product known as mechanically separated beef, a product which may contain SRMs. Meat obtained by Advanced Meat Recovery (an automated system for cutting meat from bones), may be used since USDA regulations do not allow the presence of SRMs in this product.

The second interim final rule is designed to lower even further the risk that cattle will be purposefully or inadvertently fed prohibited protein. It was the feeding of such protein to cattle that was the route of disease transmission that led to the BSE epidemic in United Kingdom cattle in the 1980's and 1990's.

This interim final rule will implement four specific changes in FDA's present animal feed rule. First, the rule will eliminate the present exemption in the feed rule that allows mammalian blood and blood products to be fed to other ruminants as a protein source. Recent scientific evidence suggests that blood can

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carry some infectivity for BSE.

Second, the rule will also ban the use of “poultry litter” as a feed ingredient for ruminant animals. Poultry litter consists of bedding, spilled feed, feathers, and fecal matter that are collected from living quarters where poultry is raised. This material is then used in cattle feed in some areas of the country where cattle and large poultry raising operations are located near each other. Poultry feed may legally contain protein that is prohibited in ruminant feed, such as bovine meat and bone meal. The concern is that spillage of poultry feed in the chicken house occurs and that poultry feed (which may contain protein prohibited in ruminant feed) is then collected as part of the “poultry litter” and added to ruminant feed.

Third, the rule will ban the use of “plate waste” as a feed ingredient for ruminants. Plate waste consists of uneaten meat and other meat scraps that are currently collected from some large restaurant operations and rendered into meat and bone meal for animal feed. The use of “plate waste” confounds FDA’s ability to analyze ruminant feed for the presence of prohibited proteins, compromising the Agency’s ability to fully enforce the animal feed rule.

Fourth, the rule will further minimize the possibility of cross-contamination of ruminant and non-ruminant animal feed by requiring equipment, facilities or production lines to be dedicated to non-ruminant animal feeds if they use protein that is prohibited in ruminant feed. Currently, some equipment, facilities and production lines process or handle prohibited and non-prohibited materials and make both ruminant and non-ruminant feed a practice which could lead to cross-contamination.

Standard and Guidance Changes

NRCS, in the past has allowed the practice of feeding processed poultry litter to beef animals. In fact the 633 Waste Utilization standard, mentions using poultry litter as a feedstock for livestock. Additionally, there is a Tech Reg category for Waste Utilization, Feedstock for Livestock. In the past, it has been acceptable to feed poultry litter to beef cattle following some specific guidelines as noted in the Poultry Water Quality Consortium Handbook.

In light of this new rule it is unlikely that NRCS will continue to provide assistance for producers who wish to refeed poultry litter or any other type of animal waste. It is expected that standards and the Poultry Water Quality Consortium Handbook will be updated soon to reflect the change in the law.

Comments on the Standard and Guidance change have been provided by:

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