



NOV 17 2009

Ms. Kari Hohne  
[Art.heals@yahoo.com](mailto:Art.heals@yahoo.com)

Dear Ms. Hohne:

Thank you for your October 31, 2009, electronic message to the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) *Ask the Expert* site requesting information regarding the inclusion of poultry in the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA). The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has been asked to respond to your message.

FSIS is the public health regulatory agency in USDA responsible for ensuring that meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. FSIS enforces the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), and the Egg Products Inspection Act, which require Federal inspection and regulation of meat, poultry, and processed egg products prepared for distribution in commerce for use as human food.

FSIS is also responsible for enforcing the HMSA, which requires that all livestock at federally inspected establishments be handled and slaughtered in a humane way. FSIS inspection program personnel perform activities on an ongoing, unscheduled basis to ensure that animals are humanely treated. In other words, industry does not know when FSIS inspection program personnel are going to inspect for humane handling and slaughter compliance.

FSIS has approximately 7,800 Federal inspection program personnel who inspect the slaughter and processing of food animals daily in privately owned livestock and poultry slaughter and processing plants to ensure a safe food supply. FSIS checks such things as livestock pens, driveways and ramps, handling of livestock, and stunning methods in an effort to ensure that humane handling and slaughter requirements are met. FSIS inspection program personnel have the authority, and are required, to take immediate regulatory action when a violation is observed. If a slaughter or processing establishment violates the regulations, FSIS can, and does, take appropriate enforcement actions against those establishments.

The HMSA does not cover poultry. However, under the PPIA, industry is required to slaughter poultry in accordance with good commercial practices. FSIS takes its obligation to enforce this law very seriously, and our inspection program personnel are authorized and expected to stop production if they witness violations of the regulations. Our goal is to prevent the needless suffering of animals while preserving the food supply.

Please visit the FSIS Web site at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov> to learn more about FSIS humane slaughter and food safety activities.

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Petersen, D.V.M., M.P.H.  
Assistant Administrator  
Office of Field Operations