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Mexico

Livestock and Products

Mexico Implements Salmonella Testing Procedures on Imported Meat

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Report Highlights:

The Government of Mexico has recently implemented sampling and testing procedures for Salmonella on imported meats. The action appears to be in response to perceived concerns about the quality and safety of imported meats. Currently, the Secretariat of Agriculture is testing cooked poultry meat, while the Secretariat of Health is testing all types of meat.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Mexico [MX1],MX

The Government of Mexico (GOM) recently implemented salmonella testing procedures on imported meat products. The action appears to have been initiated by the Secretariat of Health (SSA) in response to perceived concerns about the safety and quality of U.S. meat. Currently, both the Secretariat of Agriculture (SAGARPA) and SSA are taking samples and testing for Salmonella. A summary of each program follows.

SAGARPA Testing Program: SAGARPA is currently testing cooked poultry meat for Salmonella. The testing program is based on NOM-005-ZOO-1993 (a 1993 regulation) entitled “National Campaign Against Avian Salmonellosis.” SAGARPA appears to be basing its testing of imported cooked poultry on the NOM’s import provision, which gives SAGARPA broad authority to monitor imports to ensure that information contained on foreign health certificates is accurate.

The basic sampling procedure follows:

1. SAGARPA inspectors will take a single sample of 250 grams from every shipment (originally every lot) containing cooked poultry products. Once the sample is taken, the shipment will be permitted to enter Mexico.
2. The sample will be sent to one of four laboratories for testing. It’s possible that there will be a multi-week or month period between the taking of the sample and the notification of a positive finding.
3. If the sample is positive, subsequent shipments from the affected plant will be tested and held at each port of entry. Shipments may be delayed for up to 30 days pending the test results. No shipment will be permitted to enter until the sample from the “test and hold” shipment is found to be negative.
4. If a “test and hold” sample is positive, SAGARPA will notify SSA of its findings and reject the shipment.
5. If a “test and hold” sample is negative, the held shipment and subsequent shipments will be permitted to enter on a port-by-port basis.
6. The importer bears all testing costs.

SSA Testing Program: The SSA testing program is based on Emergency NOM EM-006-SSA1-2002 dated December 19, 2002. The NOM sets a tolerance of zero for salmonella on frozen, refrigerated, or vacuum packed meat from birds or mammals and is focused on sampling and testing of the domestic meat marketing chain. While the NOM makes no mention of sampling imported meat at the border, GOM officials indicate that the sampling of meat at the border falls under the broader authority of the General Health Law, which is referenced in this NOM.

SSA has been sampling all types of meat (cooked, fresh, frozen from all species) at several border points. Additionally, in an official announcement published March 27, 2003, the Secretariat of Economy authorized SSA to inspect imported and exported meat products with Harmonized Tariff Schedule Codes ranging from 0201.10.01 through 0209.00.99. SSA also indicates that it is conducting a domestic sampling campaign at processing plants and points of sale. SSA procedures state that three samples should be taken, one for SSA laboratories, one for the importer to test, and one for the importer to hold in the event of a difference between the first two test results.

The NOM does not have a penalty provision, nor does it provide for any type of action or response from SSA in the event of a positive finding. SSA indicates that it is merely gathering information in an effort to determine if and where there are problems with the imported and domestic meat supplies. It is not yet clear what measures the SSA may take in the event that there are perceived problems as a result of its testing regime.

Summary of SSA Standards From the Emergency
NOM Dated December 19, 2002

Product	E. Coli CFU/gram	Salmonella Per 25 grams	Staphylococcus Maximum Limit	Botulism Toxin
Frozen Meat	NA	Absent	Negative	NA
Refrigerated Meat	1000	Absent	Negative	NA
Vacuum Packed Meat	NA	Absent	Negative	Negative
Ground Refrigerated Meat	5000	Absent	Negative	NA