

31 July 2001

«LHMailingName»
«LocationName»
«PostalAddress»
«PostalTownSuburb» «PostalState» «PostalPostCode»

Dear «LHSalutation»

PRODUCTION OF UNCOOKED FERMENTED COMMINUTED MEAT PRODUCTS

The Australian Food Standards Code prescribes mandatory standards for the manufacture of uncooked fermented comminuted meat products that must be met by all businesses processing this type of product in Australia. Compliance with this Standard is also a licence condition for the licence to operate a Meat Processing Facility issued to you by the Victorian Meat Authority (VMA).

The Meat Standards Committee (MSC) of the Agricultural and Resource Council of Australia and New Zealand is responsible for ensuring consistent application and interpretation of national Codes and Standards for the meat industry. To ensure consistent application of Standards in all States and Territories any business manufacturing uncooked fermented comminuted meat products will be required to implement the following requirements in order to continue manufacturing uncooked fermented comminuted meat products:

- a) product testing in accordance with the Food Standards Code must be undertaken by 30 September 2001;
- b) a completed protocol for the manufacture of uncooked fermented comminuted meat products must be submitted to the VMA by 31 December 2001; and
- c) the protocol for the manufacture of uncooked fermented comminuted meat products must be approved by the Australia and New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) Advisory Panel by 30 June 2002.

These requirements for the manufacture of uncooked fermented comminuted meat products must be in place at all Meat Processing Facilities manufacturing uncooked fermented comminuted meat products by the dates specified above or production of these products must cease after that date.

Approved Certification Bodies (Auditors) have been instructed to raise a critical Corrective Action Request if these requirements are not in place by the specified dates. The VMA will then take action to preclude the manufacture of these products.

In order to assist in complying with these requirements, the relevant parts of the Food Standards Code relating to the manufacture of uncooked fermented comminuted meat products are enclosed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Casey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

BRIAN CASEY
Chief Executive

Production of fermented comminuted meat which has not been cooked

- (1) In this clause –
 - (a) a product has been cooked if it has had its core temperature maintained at 65°C for at least 10 minutes or an equivalent combination of time and higher temperature during production; and
 - (b) **starter culture** means a preparation of micro-organisms prepared for the purpose of fermenting meat which -
 - (i) successfully competes for the nutrients in the meat medium; and
 - (ii) produces microbial inhibitors; and
 - (iii) is microbiologically safe; and
 - (iv) produces a controlled reduction of the pH of the meat mix.
- (2) Fermentation of a comminuted meat product which will not be cooked must be initiated through the use of a starter culture.
- (3) A previously fermented or fermenting meat product must be cooked prior to use as an ingredient in a fermented comminuted meat product which will not itself be cooked.
- (4) The number of *Escherichia coli* organisms in a fermented comminuted meat product which will not be cooked must be monitored and recorded for the -
 - (a) ingoing raw meat ingredients; and
 - (b) product after fermentation and any subsequent process.
- (5) The pH of fermenting comminuted meat products which will not be cooked, measured in accordance with Method 1 in the Schedule, and the fermentation room temperature, must be monitored and recorded during fermentation.
- (6) Measurements recorded under subclauses (4) and (5) must be kept either for 1 year after the end of the minimum durable life of the product, or 2 years, whichever is the greater.
- (7) Meat for a fermented comminuted meat product which will not be cooked must, if stored by the manufacturer, be stored at 5°C or below prior to fermentation.
- (8) The process of fermentation and any other subsequent processes must reduce prior to sale from the processing factory by 99.9% or greater the number of *Escherichia coli* organisms potentially present in a fermented comminuted meat product which has not been cooked.

Schedule

Methods of Analysis

1 Meat Determination of pH.

Mince a representative portion of the sample of fermenting comminuted meat product or semi-dry heat-treated processed meat and place that portion in a stoppered bottle with twice its weight of water. Shake at five minute intervals for 30 minutes and determine the pH value of the liquid electrometrically at 20°C.

2 *Escherichia coli*

Proceed in accordance with the triplicate tube method specified in current Australian standard method AS 1766.2.3 *Food Microbiology*, save that for the purpose of this method, when 5 sample units each consisting of 10 grams or more of fermented comminuted meat product are examined as detailed, the result shall be reported as '*Escherichia coli* not detected in 0.1 g' only when no *Escherichia coli* has been detected in at least 4 of the 5 sample units.