



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety
and Inspection
Service

Washington, D.C.
20250

AUG 21 1998

Karen Davis, Ph.D.
President
United Poultry Concerns, Inc.
P.O. Box 59367
Potomac, MD 20859

Dear Dr. Davis:

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) received your April 1, 1998, petition asking the Agency to ban the practice of forced molting of laying birds used by the U.S. poultry and egg industries to control egg production in commercial laying hens and hens used for breeding. FSIS considered your request and has denied it because the Agency does not have jurisdiction over the issue.

You stated in your petition that the forced molting of laying birds is a farm practice. FSIS does not have jurisdiction over farm practices, even when those practices involve food safety issues. Therefore, FSIS cannot ban the practice of forced molting of laying birds.

However, FSIS recognizes that public health concerns are raised by highly stressful forced molting practices. For example, extended starvation and water deprivation practices lead to increased shedding of Salmonella enteritidis (Se) by laying hens subjected to these practices. Therefore, in an effort to reduce human illnesses caused by Se, FSIS is encouraging poultry and egg producers to eliminate forced molting practices and adopt alternatives that reduce public health risks. In addition, FSIS will work with the Food and Drug Administration to facilitate national meetings to build consensus on research, education and quality assurance programs which incorporate practices shown to decrease Se shedding in laying hens.

You may contact Victoria Levine, Petition Manager, Regulations Development and Analysis Division, at (202) 720-7325, if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Patricia Stolfa, Acting Director
Regulations Development and Analysis Division
Office of Policy, Program Development and Evaluation