



# GIPSA News

A newsletter for the employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

February 2004

## P&SP Contributes to Voluntary Industry Standards

*JoAnn Waterfield, Washington, DC*

In the livestock and meatpacking industries, packers and producers are expanding beyond USDA grading to determine the value and appropriate prices to pay for livestock purchased on a carcass merit basis. In the hog industry, most producers are paid based on the lean percent of their hogs – as determined by a Fat-O-Meat'er inserted into each carcass shortly after slaughter. In the cattle industry, some producers are paid based on the yield grade of their cattle – as determined by a photograph taken shortly after slaughter. The lean percent of the hogs and the yield grades of the cattle are determined by electronic evaluation devices or systems.

These electronic evaluation devices or systems are becoming more and more prevalent in the hog and cattle industries. More than 80 percent of the hogs sold for slaughtered are priced using measurements made by an electronic evaluation device. For cattle, some contracts now specify the electronic evaluation device to be used to evaluate carcasses, and the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is considering whether to approve electronic evaluation devices

instead of USDA graders in some of its approved branded programs.

Because there no standards governing the use or accuracy of electronic evaluation devices in the livestock and meatpacking industries, P&SP developed a task force to develop voluntary industry standards. The task force is comprised: **John Edmond**, **Martin Johnson** and **Jens Knuston**, headquarters; **Cary Ainsworth** and **Enrique Ospina**, Atlanta; **Jim Vanderwielen** and **Bryce Wilke**, Des Moines; and **Maggie Mills** and **Stacey Schofield**, Denver. Over the last couple of years, the P&SP task force, with assistance from ASTM International, worked with industry stakeholders, NIST, and AMS to develop the standards.

In November 2003, two voluntary industry standards were published and became effective. The first sets out requirements for packers who use the systems; the second sets out requirements for manufacturers of the devices or systems. Two other standards addressing requirements on accuracy and developing formulas are expected to be published by summer.

The National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM) has expressed an interest in incorporating the voluntary standards into NCWM Handbook 44, the “bible” of standards used by the weights and measures community.

If NCWM incorporates the voluntary standards into Handbook 44, they would become mandatory requirements and enforceable by weights and measures agencies at the State level.

*Continued, see Standards on page 4.*

### In This Issue

Names in the News .....	2
Appreciation .....	2
A New Look at Biotech .....	3
For Your Health .....	3
Training Opportunity .....	4
Issuances .....	5
Regulatory Info .....	5
Travel Bits & Pieces .....	5

# Names in the News

## PERSONNEL

**Beth Hayden** joined the Data and Information Analysis Branch as an agricultural marketing specialist. **Beth** comes to GIPSA from AMS' Audit Review and Compliance Branch, Livestock and Seed Program, where she was instrumental in developing the USDA Organic Standards and the accreditation of the Organic certifiers. She will be responsible for implementing and managing our Process Verification Program.

## FAREWELL

Shift supervisor **Harold LaFountain**, New Orleans, retired from GIPSA on January 3, 2004, after 30 years of service. **Harold** is originally from Belcourt, ND. He is an American Indian from the Chippewa Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota. **Harold** started his career with the Destrehan Board of Trade in 1969 and came to FGIS on January 1, 1977. **Harold** and his wife, **Judy**



*Harold LaFountain*

have three sons and one daughter, and nine grandchildren. After retirement, **Harold** plans to fish and play golf. The New Orleans Field Office presented **Harold** with a fishing rod and reel, and some fishing bait. We wish **Harold** well in his retirement years.

**Wil Rivera**, Executive Resources Staff, departed GIPSA on January 12, to join the Food Safety Inspection Service in Washington, DC.



**Are EEO/CR issues  
or concerns  
affecting your  
employment with  
GIPSA? Do you have  
questions? Need  
help? Then let your  
voice be heard.**

**Call the EEO Advisory  
Committee at...**

**1-800-639-5167**

**Civil Rights Hotline**

January 13, 2004

Tom Wrenn and Staff  
Federal Grain Inspection  
P.O. Box 13427  
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58208-3427

Dear Tom,

Just to let you know we appreciate the numerous donations of excess dried beans over the past year. These donations are distributed to nonprofit agencies serving the needy. In 2003 North Country Food Bank received a total of 19,300 pounds of this nutritious food from Federal Grain Inspection.

And, I must mention that I enjoy the friendly service from you and your staff when I come to pick up the donations. Thanks for a job well done and your help in meeting hunger needs.

Sincerely,

Ron Graham  
Executive Director  
North Country Food Bank, Inc.  
Crookston, Minnesota

## A New Look at Biotechnology

Ed Durgin, Washington, DC

How many of you remember *The Graduate*, a classic 1967 movie starring Dustin Hoffman? In this film, Hoffman plays Benjamin Braddock, a recent college graduate who experiences alienation and uncertainty as he contemplates and faces his future. While attending a party after graduation, a family friend whispers one word of advice in his ear: “plastics.” I would suggest that if Braddock was about to launch a career with USDA, a contemporary alternative to this advice might be “biotechnology.”

Peter Pringle, in his recent (2003) book, *Food, Inc. Mendel to Monsanto – The Promises and Perils of the Biotech Harvest*, examines this technology from a variety of perspectives. He discusses the development of Flavor Savr tomatoes, golden rice, and StarLink corn. He examines the scientific debates surrounding the effects of biotech corn on Monarch butterflies, discusses how Federal agencies regulate this technology, and explores the world of intellectual property rights and the roles that overlapping patents play as new products are developed. Pringle also looks at the language and labels (e.g., Frankenfoods) used by opponents of biotechnology, examines the concentration of this technology among a few international organizations, ponders the potential this trend presents for the monopolization of the global seed and food industries, and describes how scientists’ personal biases have influenced research into the alleged environmental effects of this technology. In sum, Pringle provides a lively account of various historical, scientific, legal and political issues related to agricultural biotechnology. At the conclusion of his book, Pringle notes:

Biotech agriculture is another step in the evolution of human food, a process of change that began slowly and now, in evolutionary terms, moves at mach speed. The changes are not inherently unsafe, nor are the companies that produce them inherently evil. (p. 202)

However, Pringle’s remarks do not follow an uncritical examination of biotechnology. He discusses the “arrogance” of the corporations in the forefront of research and marketing efforts and alleges that they have “hijacked” the technology in a self-serving manner; he accuses biotech opponents of engaging in “scaremongering;” and he suggests that Federal regulators have failed to adequately assess biotechnology’s risks.

*Food, Inc.* is food for thought. I suspect that many readers will find themselves both in agreement and disagreement with Pringle’s discussion. For an overview of the technology, its milieu, and those involved in research, marketing and regulation, this book is worth reading. And the next time someone mentions biotechnology (after learning that you work for USDA), you might begin a discussion by replying, “Have you read *Food, Inc.*?”

## For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

**Dodging Colds.** They sneak up on you before you know it...the sniffles, a tickle in your throat, sneezing and coughing. Too woozy to stand? Get ready to slow down—you’ve been caught by a cold. If you are wondering what you can do in the future to avoid this misery, try these tips:

**Wash Your Hands A Lot.** Diligent handwashing is the easiest and most effective way to avoid colds. Use soap and running water to wash away cold viruses. Also, keep your hands away from your eyes, mouth, and nose.

**Hang With The Healthy.** If possible, limit how much time you spend with people who have colds. Being around them for long periods puts you at risk for getting a cold yourself.

**Breathe In Some Steam.** Use a humidifier or a vaporizer to prevent your nose from drying out. When your nose is dry, it is vulnerable to viruses.

**Treat Your Body Right All Year Long.** Eat right. Exercise and get fresh air, even in winter. Relax. Get plenty of rest. All these things will help you build your body’s immune system.

For more information: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1-800-311-3435

*Black History Month*



*February 2004*

# GIPSA Training Opportunity

## NEW LEADER PROGRAM 2004

A Leadership Development Program  
for GS 7-11  
Federal Government Employees

The New Leader Program (NLP) is part of the Leadership Development Academy of the Graduate School, USDA. The New Leader Program is an intensive 6-month developmental program designed to prepare **full-time, permanent federal** employees at the GS 7-11 levels to become more effective leaders through a series of developmental experiences. This program places a heavy emphasis on team building and individual development. The program requires three separate weeks of residential classroom training reinforced by a 30-day developmental work experience, reading, and independent study.

**Nominating Procedures:** A competitive process is used to select GIPSA participants for the NLP. The application package includes:

1. A current, complete, signed and dated Federal Resume or OF-612. (A Federal Resume must include all components specific to a Federal Resume format.)
2. Your written statement explaining your achievement goals for participation in the NLP, that is, how this will fit your career goals.
3. A written statement from your first-line supervisor assessing your potential and your motivation to complete all requirements and fully participate in all components of the NLP.
4. A completed Mobility Clause form and Graduate School NLP application form. (The Mobility Clause form is available from the GIPSA Training office. The application form is available online at the Graduate School's Leadership Development Academy website: <http://nlp@grad.usda.gov>.)

**The application deadline is February 11, 2004**

Submit the complete application package to **Mary McCoy**, USDA, GIPSA, Training Staff, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 3649, Washington, DC 20250-3649. For additional information, call **Mary McCoy** at (202) 720-1734 or check the above website.

## Standards, from page 1.

The road to getting the standards incorporated into Handbook 44 is long. The P&SP task force will make a formal presentation to the NCWM at its annual meeting in July 2004. At the same time, P&SP will submit a written proposal and a proposed section for Handbook 44 to the NCWM for inclusion. NCWM will assign P&SP's proposal to an appropriate working group, and its internal deliberative process will get underway.

The P&SP task force will continue its work. The voluntary industry standards on electronic evaluation devices or systems are technology specific, and therefore, will be continually updated. If you are a P&SP employee, and you are interested in serving on the task force, talk with your regional supervisor. If you have general questions about the voluntary standards, call John Edmond at (202) 720-5841.

### Employee Assistance Program

For confidential assistance...

Washington, DC personnel, call...  
301-570-3900  
or 1-800-222-0364

Field personnel, call...  
1-800-222-0364

## Issuances

*Fred Kelley, Washington, D.C.*

### New Issuances

- FGIS Policy Bulletin Board, Reference #200, "Mechanical Sampler Grain Test Exemptions," dated January 8, 2004 (Distribution: A, C).
- FGIS Directive 9180.77, "Official Criteria Factor for Malting Barley," dated December 29, 2003 (Distribution: A, C, E).
- FGIS Directive 9180.71, "Fumonisin Testing Services," dated December 29, 2003 (Distribution: A, C, E).
- FGIS Directive 9180.60, "Inspection of Khorasan," dated December 30, 2003 (Distribution: A, C, U).
- Aflatoxin Handbook, Change No. 8, dated January 5, 2004 (Distribution: A, C, E).

### Cancellations

- FGIS Directive 9170.15, "Sampling Public Law 480, Title II, Bags and Fiberboard Shipping Containers, dated May 1, 1997.
- FGIS Directive 9180.71, "Fumonisin Testing Services," dated December 16, 2002.
- FGIS Directive 9180.60, "Inspection of Kamut," dated April 15, 1998.

Please call me at 202-720-0259, Fax to 202-690-2755 or e-mail to [Fred.H.Kelley@usda.gov](mailto:Fred.H.Kelley@usda.gov) if you have any concerns or suggestions.

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## Regulatory Info

*Tess Butler, Washington, DC*

### Federal Register Publications

- Deposting of Stockyards - published January 13, 2004
- Fees for Processed Commodity Analytical Services - published January 13, 2004
- Request for Public Comment on the United States Standards for Sorghum – published December 17, 2003
- Update Office of Management and Budget Control Numbers – published December 31, 2003

## Travel Bits & Pieces

*Peggy Smith, Washington, DC*

There's been some confusion about when M&IE rates should be reduced when meals are furnished at no cost or at nominal cost to the employee by the Federal Government.

If a meal is provided by a common carrier or a complimentary meal is provided by a hotel/motel, this does not affect your M&IE. However, your M&IE rate must be adjusted for a meal(s) furnished to you, with or without cost, if the meal is furnished by the Federal Government.

If you choose not to eat the meal, you will still have to deduct for that meal. If you can't eat the meal due to diet or religious reasons, you will still have to deduct. When you know a meal is being provided and you require a special meal, you must make arrangements in advance to have a special meal provided.

**GIPSA News** is the employee newsletter of the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Send your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue to:

### Dana Stewart

USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3601  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-3601  
Phone (202) 720-5091  
FAX (202) 205-9237  
[dana.b.stewart@usda.gov](mailto:dana.b.stewart@usda.gov)

**by February 25, 2004!**

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR  
USDA, GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS  
AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION  
STOP 3601  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20250-3601

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