

## USDA's MARCH 7, 2012 RESPONSE TO AMMONIATED BEEF INQUIRIES

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), administered by the USDA, purchases approximately 20 percent of the products served in schools across the country. In other words, the majority, approximately 80 percent, is purchased by schools or school districts directly through private vendors and not USDA. In its role as the purchasing agent, to quantify how much of a particular product purchased by USDA is served in specific school districts or specific schools is difficult to measure and depends upon a case by case or even school-by-school basis. Procurement officials for schools may have this information.

Since the early 1990s, Lean Finely Textured Beef (LFTB) has been allowed as a component of the ground beef purchased by USDA for distribution through the NSLP. The maximum allowable percentage of LFTB that may be formulated into single servings of the ground beef purchased for the NSLP is 15 percent, which is similar to the composition found in many commercially available ground beef products. USDA does not purchase LFTB directly. Rather, LFTB may be used as a raw material in USDA-purchased ground beef products after it undergoes stringent testing. Of the ground beef purchased by USDA in 2011 for the NSLP, LFTB comprised approximately 6.5 percent of the total volume.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration as well as the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) considers ammonium hydroxide as "generally recognized as safe." FSIS reviewed the suitability of Beef Products, Inc.'s (BPI) use of ammonium hydroxide in order to assess its effectiveness in performing the intended technical purpose of use, at the lowest level necessary, and to ensure that the product is not adulterated or misleading to consumers.

All USDA beef purchases for the NSLP and other Federal food and nutrition assistance programs meet very high food safety standards, which include stringent pathogen testing. Beef supplied by BPI as a component of the beef products purchased by USDA for the NSLP is subject to the same strict pathogen testing requirements for beef raw ingredients.

Additional information on this product or product specific inquiries should be directed to BPI at <http://www.beefproducts.com/>.

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