

News From Your County Agent
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Over the weekend the constant roar of push mowers, riding mowers and weed eaters could be heard across town as everyone was busy trying to keep their landscapes mowed, which is good since this also helps in keeping mosquito populations in check. According to weather forecasters no rain is expected in our area for the rest of the week but chances begin increasing over the weekend but we shall see. We are well into to June now and for all practical purposes the temperatures in our area have been bearable, and in fact Monday morning was sure nice and very cool. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

New Rules Announced for Tenderized Beef

All of us many times look for tenderized beef while shopping and some meat markets in the area will ask you if you would like to have your purchase tenderized before wrapping it. We do not give it much thought however the United States Department of Agriculture(USDA) does take this process into account, and serious enough to issue new rulings. Last month the USDA issued a new rule requiring that mechanically tenderized beef be labeled as such and include safe cooking instructions for consumers. Mechanical tenderizing has been controversial, since piercing cuts of beef with needles or small blades to increase tenderness can potentially cause interior contamination with microbial pathogens. That rarely happens — since 2000, there have only been six reports of foodborne illness linked to mechanically tenderized beef, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — but the process means that merely searing the surface of steaks and roasts may no longer be enough to ensure food safety. In a news release in last month, the Food Safety and Inspection Service stated that, “[Mechanically tenderized] products, like all whole cuts of beef, should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees F, as measured with a food thermometer, before removing meat from the heat source.”

In an important addendum, FSIS urged consumers to “allow meat to rest for at least three minutes after it has been removed from the heat source before carving or consuming” as a way to further destroy potential pathogens. That’s a key consideration, and hopefully one that will eventually be as commonplace a consumer food-handling habit as segregating a meat cutting board from one used to prepare produce has become. The threat of foodborne illness from mechanically tenderized beef, while far down the scale of potential food-safety problems, is genuine. Fortunately, it can be completely negated simply by properly cooking and handling of the raw meat.

Veterinary Feed Directive Module Available Free

A few columns ago I provided you with initial information on the new Veterinary Feed Directive which will go into effect on January 1, 2017. In an effort to provide you with the most up-to-date information on upcoming changes in regulations related to the Veterinary Feed Directive, the Beef Cattle Institute (BCI) at Kansas State University is offering a new online resource – for free. The BCI partnered with animal health experts at Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine and the Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, to create an online informational module that