This edition of the news features

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- Seafood

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Innovation and alternative techniques

A business proposing a processing technique not described in the Australian Standards for food safety must seek approval from PrimeSafe before using the process. Examples of alternative techniques include cooking processes such as 'high temperature short time' and 'low temperature long time'; cooling processes; curing processes; and technically challenging processes such as dry ageing, sous vide and high-pressure processing.

For approval of an alternative process, a proposal must be submitted to PrimeSafe with a HACCP plan including procedures that verify the food safety equivalence. The food safety level must be equal to or higher than the technique described in the Standards. The proposal must include one of the following:

- **Validation** of the alternative technique through the use of microbiological analysis (where appropriate) confirming that the proposal demonstrates an equivalent or better outcome required by the relevant Standard.

  Note: The microbiological analysis must include a comparison of the microbiological results achieved using procedures that comply with the relevant Standard and the results achieved using the proposed alternative techniques.

STEP 1
Describe alternative technique process

STEP 2
Have an accredited laboratory do product testing & shelf life trials

STEP 3
PrimeSafe considers application. If approved, alternative technique will be included in audit.

- **Verification** of a technique from a recognised scientific or credible source that has validated the technique. Monitoring records are required to verify that the alternative technique is implemented correctly in the current facility.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
Find alternative technique described by scientific source.	Gain monitoring records of food safety data from where technique is being used.	PrimeSafe considers application. If approved, alternative technique will be included in audit.

For more information about alternative approvals, contact PrimeSafe on (03) 9685 7333 or at info@primesafe.vic.gov.au

Animal welfare

All Victorian abattoirs and processing facilities have the responsibility to minimise the risk of injury, pain, suffering and practical disturbance to animals. PrimeSafe conducts announced and unannounced inspections to ensure facilities handle livestock in compliance with the Australian Standards and the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments.

These inspections include an assessment of the following:

- Design of pre-slaughter holding facilities to ensure minimal stress to livestock;
- Access to feed and water;
- Stunning and slaughtering equipment is operational and maintained;
- Restraint, stunning and slaughter of livestock are carried out humanely with minimal stress;
- Trained and authorised personnel conduct stunning and slaughter of livestock;
- Pre and post operational inspections, and monitoring of lairage and slaughter areas; and
- Procedures and records are included and maintained in the food safety program.

Anyone with information about non-compliant animal welfare practice should contact PrimeSafe on info@primesafe.vic.gov.au

REGULATORY UPDATE - NLIS tagging for sheep traceability

New requirements for National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) tagging have enhanced the traceability of sheep and goat meat.

Further meat processors and retailers should be aware of these new requirements, but do not necessarily have to take any action.

However, accurate and timely record keeping is needed to meet traceability compliance requirements and can minimise losses in the case of a product recall.

NLIS is Australia's system for identifying and tracking cattle, sheep and goats from the farm of birth, through the processing chain and to the retailer. This system helps manage biosecurity and food safety. NLIS also enhances Victoria's reputation as a key quality supplier within the domestic and export markets and helps to establish consumer confidence in meat products coming from Victoria.

Since 1 January 2017, all Victorian abattoirs have been required to scan electronic NLIS tags for sheep and goats and upload the Property Identification Code (PIC) number and NLIS tag's transponder number or visually readable number to the NLIS database within 48 hours of processing. The *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994* and *Livestock Control Regulations of 2017* require these new arrangements to be in place. All Victorian abattoirs are required to amend their food safety program to meet the new regulations and the new licence conditions.

Cattle
NLIS tagging for cattle requires either Breeder or Post-breeder tags. A Breeder tag is white and used to permanently identify cattle that are on their property of birth. Post-breeder tags are orange and are used to identify introduced cattle.

Sheep and Goats
When receiving livestock, abattoirs must ensure sheep and goats are identified with a NLIS tag. Other than in the context of the sheep or goat being slaughtered in an abattoir or knackery, the electronic NLIS tag must not be removed from the animal, damaged or disfigured in any way. The colour of the NLIS tag for sheep and goat breeders rotates every eight years in accordance with the national 'year of birth' colour system.

Year	Tag colour	Year	Tag colour

2008	**Black**
2009	**White**
2010	**Orange**
2011	**Light green**
2012	**Purple**
2013	**Yellow**
2014	**Red**
2015	**Sky blue**

2016	**Black**
2017	**White**
2018	**Orange**
2019	**Light green**
2020	**Purple**
2021	**Yellow**
2022	**Red**
2023	**Sky blue**

Any year	**Post-breeder tags must be pink**

To read more about the requirements of NLIS tagging for sheep and goats, click here.

Other species
Identification of other species is required but not by a NLIS tag. Pigs have a tattoo applied, or have branding or ear tagging. Poultry have no individual identifier however, the PIC is recorded.

Mincing guidelines – poultry

PrimeSafe has developed a new guideline to assist licensees to understand the use of soft cartilage and bone (poultry frames) in poultry mince. PrimeSafe licensed facilities are required to process meat and poultry products that meet the wholesomeness criteria described in the Australian and Victorian Standards. Products are required to be free of biological, chemical and physical contaminants. Bone is considered a physical hazard; therefore, the food safety program of the business must include procedures and a risk assessment for including bone in a minced meat product. Click here to access the Processing Minced Meat Guideline.

Seafood facilities

Seafood businesses must comply with the Food Standards Code and must identify potential food safety hazards and implement controls to minimise food safety risks. Food Standards Code 4.2.1 Primary Production and Processing Standard for Seafood sets out the food safety requirements from pre-harvesting to primary production of seafood but does not include manufacture of seafood products. Production includes processes such as killing, gutting, filleting, brining, shucking and depuration of shellfish. Manufacturing processes includes canning, smoking and crumbing are covered by other sections of the Food Standards Code.
Live seafood for sale does not require refrigeration. However, seafood that is no longer live (fresh) requires storage at 5°C or below to minimise the growth of pathogenic microorganisms such as *Listeria*, *Vibrio* and *Salmonella* that may cause foodborne illnesses. Temperature abuse of seafood can result in poor quality, reduction in shelf life and increased food safety risks.

Businesses are also required to have traceability and labelling procedures in their food safety program to meet the requirements of Section 1.2 of the Food Standards Code. This ensures that if there is a food safety issue or a recall, the product can be traced to the supplier of the seafood. Some handy tips for your seafood business:

Businesses are also required to have traceability and labelling procedures in their food safety program to meet the requirements of Section 1.2 of the Food Standards Code. This ensures that if there is a food safety issue or a recall, the product can be traced to the supplier of the seafood. Some handy tips for your seafood business:

- Display and store seafood on ice and/or under active refrigeration to maintain a product temperature of 5°C or below;
- Avoid layering seafood on top of each other;
- Avoid overcrowding the retail display cabinet and cool room so that sufficient airflow around the seafood is maintained;
- Ice must be made with potable water;
- Unpackaged seafood for retail display must contain a sign stating the species of seafood/fish, pricing and country of origin labelling (CoOL)
- Labels/signs must not contaminate the seafood;
- Segregate ready-to-eat from not ready-to-eat products;
- Do not store or display unpackaged product in the shop-front where it can be handled by consumers; and
- Retain invoices and keep traceability records.

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