



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food Safety  
and Inspection  
Service

Office of Field  
Operations

(b)(6)

Lincoln, NE Circuit  
205 W 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Wahoo, NE 68066

February 22, 2021

To: Dr. Robert Reeder, DDM  
Dr. Jessica Van Hook, DDM

(b)(6)

Denver District

From: (b)(6)  
Denver District

Subject: Humane Handling During Inclement Weather (HATS Category I)

On 2/17/21 and 2/18/21, I, (b)(6) performed a record review of Smithfield Foods' humane handling records spanning from 2/15/21 to 2/16/21. The record revealed that the establishment did not follow its written humane handling program (Section 2: Transportation and Receiving) to unload trailers in a timely manner with a targeted wait time of 60 minutes. On 2/15/21, the outside temperature ranged from -4 to -25 degrees Fahrenheit. On 2/16/21, the outside temperature ranged from 2 to -27 degrees Fahrenheit. On 2/15/21, the establishment records showed that 27 trailers arrived and were not unloaded until more than 60 minutes later. On 2/16/21, the establishment records showed that 12 trailers arrived and were not unloaded until more than 60 minutes later. Due to the establishment not unloading the trailers into the heated barn, the animals were left on the trailers and exposed to outside temperature that was below 0-degree Fahrenheit. The establishment did not adapt its holding practices to accommodate for this inclement weather.

Denver District Office was contacted by supervisory channels.



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Wahoo, NE 68066

February 19, 2021

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Denver District

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Denver District

**Subject: Report on Pigs Allegedly Freezing to Death at Smithfield Fresh Meats Corp. in Crete**

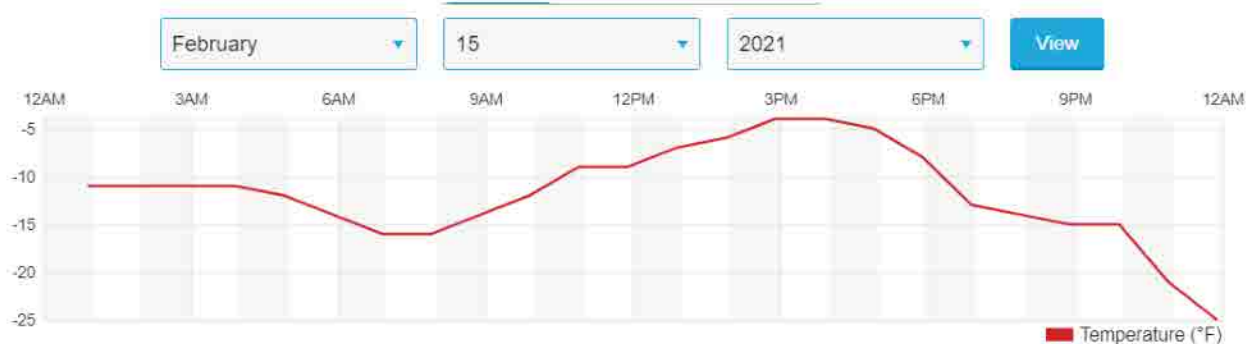
(b)(6)

This report serves to summarize my findings from daily personal observations and reviewing records documented by Smithfield Foods, establishment # M717CR, from 2/15/21 to 2/16/21 in response to the allegations that pigs froze to death at Smithfield Foods.

**Records:**

From 2/1/21 to 2/16/21, the highest number of deads (dead-on-arrival, dead-at-plant, and dead-in-pen) were documented on 2/15/21 and 2/16/21. There were 55 deaths from 2/15/21 and 36 deaths from 2/16/21. The other days in that span of 2 weeks had a range of 18 to 32 deaths. I reviewed records from 2/15 and 2/16 specifically because those were the two days with the highest death counts and the coldest temperatures.

- On 2/15, there were 67 trailers that arrived at the plant.
  - From those that waited longer than 60 minutes between arrival to unloading
    - There were 22 trailers without any dead
    - There were 6 trailers with dead animals
      - The waits ranged between 60 minutes to 107 minutes. Most of these loads were received in the early afternoon, so not as cold as the early morning.



(Source: <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/ne/lincoln/KLNK/date/2021-2-15>)

- 1 load waited 94 minutes with 2 DOAs, from Old Stone
- 1 load waited 60 min with 2 DOAs, from Eagle's Nest
- 1 load waited 87 min with 2 DOAs and 2 DAPs, from Old Stone
- 1 load waited 93 minutes with 2 DOAs
- 1 load waited 107 minutes with 3 DOAs
- 1 load waited 69 minutes with 3 DOAs and 3 DAPS, from Old Stone
- Eagle's Nest farm: Condemnation records and trimming records showed many animals from this farm had pneumonia or pleuritis, which means their existing condition may have contributed to their deaths during transport and wait time.
- Old Stone farm: There were multiple loads brought in from this farm. The plant is claiming the herding of the pigs on the big farm may have led to more fatigue, causing the animals to be more susceptible to harsh weather.
- From those that waited less than 60 minutes
  - There were 17 trailers with at least 1 dead
- On 2/16, a total of 61 trailers arrived.
  - There were a total of 12 to 13 loads that waited longer than 60 minutes
    - 1 waited for 60 minutes with 2 deads.
    - The other ones did not have deads.
  - Of those that waited less than 60 minutes,
    - Many had deads, ranging from 1-3 deads per trailer.



(Source: <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/ne/lincoln/KLNK/date/2021-2-16>)

- Note that the temperature in the early morning of 2/16 is much colder than 2/15 and there was less deads from 2/16 than 2/15.

### Observations:

Here are my personal observations during humane handling verification tasks from last week until now:

- Either on 2/8 or 2/9/21, due to the cold weather seeping into the warm barn causing fog to form, I was not able to perform antemortem inspection for the pens at 2 ends (west and east ends). I brought the issue up to the livestock handlers and the plant had performed maintenance on the barn heaters. The plant manager, Mr. Paul Doremus, had recorded that the maintenance on the barn heaters began on 2/8/21. On the morning of 2/10/21, the barn looked great with very little fog; this indicated to me that heaters were running. I also observed a portable heater brought in to heat up the east end of the barn that morning. Most of the barn heaters from the wall were also running as I passed through them during antemortem inspection. There are still maintenance



personnel present in the barn daily ever since the beginning of last week, to keep the heaters running and keep the water line from freezing.

- Sometimes before last week, in the livestock office where drivers walk in to check in, a posting was put on to remind drivers about closing the trailer openings/holes and providing adequate bedding for various temperatures, especially with the cold temperature coming up. The posting also suggested reducing the number of pigs on each load to allow them more space to move.
- On 2/13/21, at the end of the last antemortem inspection round, I noticed there were more hogs in pen compared to the usual Saturdays that I have worked here. On the video meeting with plant management and animal handling specialists, I confirmed that this is true; the plant said they had stocked up the barn more than usual for the end of Saturday in preparation for the cold on Monday (2/15/21). This meant they did not have to transport many animals in on early Monday morning and animal presence in the barn helped maintain the barn warmth. I saw that they also added some shavings for bedding (and of course, feed) in these pens when I made my round on Monday morning.
- I did notice frostbite lesions on a least one hog in each pen on the very cold days. The lesions varied in size; sometimes covering up to an area that can measure up to approximately a foot in diameter. When frostbite was brought up for discussion, I asked if the plant had talked to drivers about frostbite. (b)(6) of Smithfield, and (b)(6) (b)(6) said in the video conference today (2/17/21) that the plant continuously communicate with the owners and drivers on reducing the number of hogs in a trailer so that the hogs have space to move on the trailer to reduce/prevent frostbite.
- (b)(6) also said that they will respond to PETA to address the allegations.

In conclusion, the allegation that the animals were left in unheated barn is completely false. The allegation that animals were left on trucks for hours on premise, which contributed to frostbites and freezing to death is questionable, as you can probably deduce from the numbers I mentioned. It is true that the establishment did not unload many trailers in a timely manner. However, the wait time on the trucks did not consistently correlate with the number of dead reported from the trailers. I am not trained in statistics and did not analyze the numbers thoroughly but there seems to be as many deads from trailers that waited less than 60 minutes compared to those that waited more than 60 minutes. If the establishment had neglected the animals in the cold, leading to them dying by freezing to death, then one would expect more deads reported on the 16<sup>th</sup> compared to the 15<sup>th</sup>. Transporting in extreme heat or cold inherently causes animals to succumb, especially if they have underlying conditions, which may be a case for one of the trailers that waited longer than 60 minutes on 2/15/21. In regard to frostbite lesions, it is reasonable to expect them to occur during transport as well as during wait time on premise. Although I did observe frostbites on the animals, I am not able to say that frostbite lesions were solely from increased wait time.

**From:** (b)(6)  
**To:** (b)(6) - FSIS; Reeder, Robert - FSIS; Van Hook, Jessica - FSIS; (b)(6) - FSIS; (b)(6) - FSIS  
**Subject:** RE: Inclement weather MOI from Crete  
**Date:** Monday, February 22, 2021 11:33:05 AM

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Hi (b)(6)

I observed frost bitten animals on the cold days before 2/15 & 2/16, not just during those days. I can't solidly say that the number of frost-bitten animals were higher from those trailers waiting longer than 60 minutes because I saw frost bite lesions in almost all pens during antemortem. I did not count the lesions and animals with lesions.

Through the records for 2/15 and 2/16 that I reviewed, 6 out of 22 trailers that waited longer than 60 minutes had more than 1 dead (2-6 deads per trailer). The other 16 trailers did not have any dead. Ironically, there were 17 trailers that unloaded before 60 minutes of wait time and each trailer had 1 dead/trailer. So if you're just looking at the 6 trailers with >1 dead, then there was a higher number of dead from them.

The establishment hasn't informed me of what they're doing to prevent the delay of unloading since I last spoke to them about the issue.

Thank you,

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