

# Circular

86/6/2, 86/12/6

Ref: 15/5/17 ALM

21 July 1986

to: Export Slaughterhouses  
 Abattoirs  
 Meat Packing Houses  
 Packing Houses (Meat)  
 Canneries  
 Deer Slaughtering Premises  
 Packing Houses (Game and Game Meat)  
 New Zealand Meat Industry Association

subject: HEAD AND NECK MEAT TRIMMINGS

previous circular  
 or manual ref:

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 A recent epidemiological study by the Minnesota Department of Health has associated beef products made from meat trimmings containing thyroid glands with an unusually high incidence of thyrotoxicosis in humans. Although this condition has been described in the medical literature for over 10 years, this is the first time that a strong statistical linkage has been made with the repeated consumption of beef products containing thyroid tissue.

1.2 Observations have revealed that some U.S. premises have been salvaging the muscle tissue surrounding the larynx, for human consumption. This procedure, while producing only small amounts of trimmings (50-90 gm), has resulted in all or major portions of the thyroid gland being saved and incorporated into beef trimmings.

2.

1.1 Although the Department of Health is unaware of any suggested association in New Zealand between thyrotoxicosis and the ingestion of beef trimmings, it has requested that cognizance be taken of the U.S. evidence and corrective action implemented to eliminate an existing or potential problem.

2. AIM

To ensure that thyroid gland material from any species of red meat animal is not incorporated into meat trimmings destined for human consumption.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 Inspectors in charge of slaughtering premises in conjunction with company management, are to review the head removal procedures in the premises.

3.2 During head removal, the thyroid gland is to remain attached and intact on the larynx.

3.3 No muscular tissue surrounding the larynx may be salvaged for human consumption.

3.4 The larynx including the thyroid gland and associated muscle tissue is considered to be inedible product, therefore unsuitable for human consumption.

3.5 Thyroid glands may however be saved for pharmaceutical purposes. Glands salvaged for pharmaceutical (edible) use must be handled in an edible manner throughout the process.

3.6 It is expected that companies will incorporate the surveillance of head and neck meat trimmings, into their on-plant Quality Assurance Programs.

3.7 Inspectors in charge of premises saving or processing head and neck trimmings (e.g. slaughtering premises, Canneries, PH's, etc) are to randomly check that the trimmings being saved or processed do not contain thyroid material. Trimmings found to contain thyroid tissue must be condemned and company management advised where this occurs.