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Testimony on SB 302
to
The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

By Erik Wisner, Regulatory and Policy Special Assistant
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Good morning, Chairman Powell, and members of the committee. I am Erik Wisner, Regulatory and Policy Special Assistant with the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and I am here in support of Senate Bill 302. This bill represents a compromise agreement between KDA and the Kansas Meat Processors Association that will allow us to maintain an “equal to” program in the state while also providing clarity in the laws regulating state-inspected meat plants. Inspected and custom plants in the state should see no change in the day-to-day operations of their plants, and there will be no changes in administration and enforcement of the act by the program based on these proposed amendments.

SB 302 authorizes the secretary to ensure animals are handled and slaughtered humanely at plants registered under the Meat and Poultry Inspection Act by amending KSA 65-6a20 and 65-6a31. This change is necessary for the state inspection program to maintain its “equal to” status according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service. Additionally, KSA 65-6a41 would be amended so record keeping requirements are similar to the requirements in the federal acts.

SB 302 adds two new sections to the Meat and Poultry Inspection Act. Voluntary inspection authority for non-amenable species is added by this bill. This will provide greater flexibility for plants wanting to slaughter animals other than livestock, poultry or rabbits under inspection. The final new section contains provisions for when inspection services are required and instructs the secretary to take into account the efficient and effective use of personnel when approving inspection work schedules for inspected operations. This language is similar to the federal regulation currently adopted by reference.

This bill amends KSA 65-6a34 by establishing a \$25 registration fee for all registrations. The \$25 fee allows the program to cover the administrative costs of issuing the registration. Currently, fees under the Meat and Poultry Inspection Act range from no cost to \$250. Kansas has the second highest registration fees of any state inspection program. USDA and most other states have a free or minimal registration fee. At present, while registration for wholesalers is free, they are still issued a registration and receive an inspection by the program. At this time, the current fees only represent about 1 percent of the total budget for the program. Because the fees make up such a small portion of the budget, any decrease will not affect program operations.

SB 302 makes technical changes to the definitions, to ensure clarity and consistency throughout the act. A new definition for “humane slaughter act” was also added to supplement amendments made regarding humane slaughter.

I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.