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120 years of carcass-by-carcass meat inspection- Are there better ways to provide food safety assurance?

An impressive gathering of public health officials and veterinarians in Germany at the end of the 19th century, a time where illness and death from meat borne disease was common and led to the introduction of formal slaughter and meat inspection as we know it today. 120 years later, veterinary authorities in many countries struggle with a resource-intensive meat inspection system that has, in many cases, not changed at its core since its inception. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is working on future-oriented ways to oversee meat production in a manner that is sustainable and will achieve the same or better food safety outcomes than traditional carcass-by-carcass inspection. Key steps of the process are the identification of activities that are food safety critical, as opposed to food suitability or food quality, matching the risk of food safety defects to appropriate oversight activities and developing an inspection model that is applicable to all food animal species. Historical roots must be remembered- meat inspection initially had public health goals, but the major driver was international trade in meat. Consequently, changes to one country's meat inspection procedures that can have significant impact on the domestic industry's ability to export meat product. The fear of economic re-percussions can paralyze modernization efforts and any successful path forward for meat inspection must provide workable solutions for this concern. The CFIA is working in close contact with like-minded international regulators and embracing internationally accepted standards to bring about change in a manner that maintains public trust into the meat inspection system and avoids disruptions in trade of meat products.

Biography

Martin Appelt is the Director of the Meat Hygiene division in the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. He is a Veterinarian with expertise in Food Animal Clinical Practice, Regulatory Animal Health and Food Production. He is a graduate from the Vienna Veterinary University, Austria; he obtained a PhD in Animal Husbandry and Welfare, specializing in Food Animal Transport at Sea.

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