

Open Letter to BPI Customers and Friends

On New Year's Eve, the New York Times published a story on BPI. Notwithstanding all the information we provided over the last six months, the reporter chose to focus on the sensational, not the science; on isolated events, not the decades of food safety progress. To you, our customers and partners in food safety, we want to tell the rest of the story.

For over 30 years BPI has dedicated itself to providing consumers with the safest, highest quality, lean beef. In all that time, BPI products have never been implicated in a death or illness. This is not luck, but the product of years of hard work.

We have used science to make our products safer. One part of our food safety process is the use of ammonium hydroxide. FDA has affirmed this substance as GRAS ("Generally Regarded As Safe") and it is used in countless food products as a processing aid. The focus should be on what it does – make food safer.

To assure that *E. coli* O157:H7 is not in the products you buy:

- We have raw material purchase specifications requiring control of the pathogen during slaughter, specifications which we routinely audit against.
- We have *the* best raw beef intervention in use today to destroy *E. coli* O157:H7, an intervention repeatedly validated by independent third parties.
- We have a test and hold sampling system, taking almost three times as many samples per lot as FSIS or industry, so as to detect the potential presence of the pathogen before shipment and provide feedback to our process. We have the most rigorous sampling and test/hold system that ensures us and you that we will detect potential pathogens not eliminated by all of these interventions. By comparison to the FSIS or industry standard, we take nearly three times the number of samples, giving the BPI program a much higher statistical confidence level. No product is shipped to you without a negative test result.

There is no one silver bullet for food safety. However, the strategy we employ has proven very effective in controlling *E. coli* O157:H7. As the Times reported, for calendar year 2009, the BPI sampling program resulted in detection of *E. coli* O157:H7 of 0.06%. All of this product was detected by BPI's Test and Hold program and no product ever left BPI's control. They did not put that into context though by comparison to FSIS findings in their samplings of other trim or raw ground beef components. That comparative rate is 1.03% - more than 17 times the BPI rate even though BPI uses a more rigorous sampling method. Still, we each need to continue our work on and improve our entire food safety process to enhance food safety. That is what BPI is all about and that is what we do every day.

As each of you that has ever visited a BPI facility know, we spend endless hours developing and improving not only our products, but those facilities as well. We not only have room pressurized airflow (to prevent infiltration from the outside environment), we have systems that sanitize the very air. When sanitary equipment from other vendors

doesn't meet BPI's standards, we design and build our own. We have invested literally millions of dollars in sanitary design. We have been proud to show our plants to customers and consumer groups. Everyone who has ever visited was impressed by all we do. If you have never been to our facilities, or if you want to come back, please be our guest.

Food safety is the core of what BPI is, has been, and always will be.

We have been extremely fortunate in being able to do business with each and every one of you. We have been honored and humbled at the various food safety awards which we have received. While we regret the NY Times chose to depict our company in the manner it did, that is not important. What is important is that we use this opportunity to rededicate ourselves and continue as a leader in food safety. To accomplish this, we ask for your trust and assistance as we prove the naysayers wrong, yet again.

/s/

Eldon Roth