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February 26, 2001

FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket No. 00-48N
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Room 102 Cotton Annex
300 12* St. SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

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Norman A. Portney

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Re: Viskase Statement on the Joint USDA/FDA Draft Listeria Risk Assessment and Action Plan

FSIS Docket Clerk

Viskase agrees with the American Meat Institute's statements of January 18, 2001 and commends the joint USDA/FDA's Listeria draft risk assessment and action plan for its thorough examination of the risks of contracting Listeria monocytogenes from ready-to-eat foods and evenhanded approach to managing these risks.

As a worldwide technological leader in the food packaging industry, Viskase recognizes the need for continually educating consumers, food processors and retailers in the proper methods of preparing and handling foods, even those that are deemed ready-to-eat. We are developing new food packaging systems that will work with the food processors, using good manufacturing practices, to further reduce the risk of listeriosis. We are hopeful that government regulatory rules and restrictions on new food packaging systems will not impede the progress of these developments.

In addition, we encourage research and development in both the public and private sectors that is directed toward developing tools for measuring food borne contaminants at realistic and reasonable levels so that the proper safeguards can be implemented and mass distributed by the most cost effective means.

Sincerely yours,

Norman A. Portney, PhD.
Manager, Regulatory Affairs
708-496-4372

CC: Patent & Trademark Dept. - Viskase
Dr. M. D. Nicholson - Viskase