

Fact Sheet Lean Finely Textured Beef

Background: For almost two decades, Lean Finely-Textured Beef (LFTB) has been an acceptable component of commercial ground beef and the ground beef purchased by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) for distribution through Federal food and nutrition assistance programs, which includes the national school lunch program (NSLP). The maximum allowable percentage of LFTB that may be included in a single serving of the USDA-purchased ground beef is 15 percent, which is similar to incorporation rates in many commercial ground beef products. USDA does not purchase LFTB directly. Rather, LFTB may be used as a raw material in USDA-purchased ground beef products after it undergoes stringent testing.

Key Facts to Consider:

- LFTB is a safe, high quality protein product, which is very low in fat, and has a proven track record of use in USDA ground beef purchases and a wide variety of commercial beef items. Of the ground beef purchased by USDA in 2011, LFTB comprised approximately 6.5 percent of the total volume.
- Among the policies and procedures currently protecting school children are inspection and food safety plan requirements for each cafeteria, rigorous purchasing requirements and testing protocols, and mandatory food safety controls.
- Ammonium hydroxide is used as a processing aid to produce a lean meat product that is added to ground beef. Ammonium hydroxide also is used in a variety of other processed foods, such as baked goods, gelatins and puddings, and cheeses, and can occur naturally in foods.
- Only beef that has successfully completed the inspection requirements by the Food Safety and Inspection Service is eligible to enter into commerce and the NSLP. In addition, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) imposes strict requirements on food purchased by USDA for the NSLP to ensure that the food served to our children is safe, such as routine testing of all ground beef products for pathogens before any product is delivered.
- USDA has a zero tolerance for *Salmonella* and *E. coli* 0157:H7 in all AMS beef purchases for the NSLP. Beef that tests positive for these organisms is rejected and never supplied to schools. This includes LFTB used as a raw material in ground beef products.
- LFTB is used in many commercial ground beef products available in fast food chains, restaurants, retail grocery stores, and non-commercial operations such as hospitals, in addition to schools.
- The Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Food and Drug Administration consider ammonium hydroxide as a “Generally Recognized As Safe” food additive. See http://www.beefproducts.com/government_academic/ISU-Ammonium.pdf and <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/fcn/fcnDetailNavigation.cfm?rpt=scogsListing&id=27> [http://www.foodinsight.org/Resources/Detail.aspx?topic=Questions and Answers about Ammonium Hydroxide Use in Food Production](http://www.foodinsight.org/Resources/Detail.aspx?topic=Questions_and_Answers_about_Ammonium_Hydroxide_Use_in_Food_Production)