



# Wyoming Department of Education

Cindy Hill, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Hathaway Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 2300 Capitol Avenue  
Cheyenne WY 82002-0050

Phone: 307-777-7675 Fax: 307-777-6234 Website: [edu.wyoming.gov](http://edu.wyoming.gov)

---

## MEMORANDUM NO. 2012-056

**TO:** School District Superintendents

**FROM:** Roxann Greenlee, Nutrition Program Consultant  
Support Systems and Resources Division

**DATE:** April 2, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Lean Finely Textured Beef (aka "pink slime") in the National School Lunch Program

---

### INFORMATION TO SHARE

There have been many news stories recently referring to "pink slime," which is a derogatory term for Lean Finely Textured Beef (LFTB). Boneless, lean beef trimmings are, as their name suggests, trimmings from large cuts of meat. We have received many questions and concerns about whether this product is being served in our schools. USDA procured 'fine grind beef' for use in the National School Lunch Program possibly contains LFTB. The reason we say *possibly* is that the USDA states in its specifications that a processor has the option to include up to 15% LFTB in their ground beef. We cannot currently tell whether the ground beef purchased contains LFTB because processors are not required to show it on the food label. LFTB is still beef and not a separate ingredient.

In the school year 2012-2013, we will be able to guarantee that no beef product provided to schools in Wyoming through the School Food Distribution Program will contain LFTB. However, this topic will be revisited for the school year 2013-2014 because beef containing LFTB will likely be significantly cheaper, and LFTB poses absolutely no health risks. It has been a component in USDA procured ground beef since the early 1990's. In the school year 2013-2014 we foresee offering both ground beef with and without LFTB as options to the schools.

The following page contains the USDA response to LFTB and is accompanied by a press release from the USDA.

For more information on this topic contact Roxann Greenlee at (307)857-9269 or email at [roxann.greenlee@wyo.gov](mailto:roxann.greenlee@wyo.gov).

USDA's response to questions regarding Lean Finely Textured Beef:

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), administered by the USDA, purchases approximately 20 percent of the products served in schools across the country. In other words, the majority, approximately 80 percent, is purchased by schools or school districts directly through private vendors and not USDA. In its role as the purchasing agent, to quantify how much of a particular product purchased by USDA is served in specific school districts or specific schools is difficult to measure and depends upon a case by case or even school-by-school basis. Procurement officials for schools may have this information.

Since the early 1990s, Lean Finely Textured Beef (LFTB) has been allowed as a component of the ground beef purchased by USDA for distribution through the NSLP. The maximum allowable percentage of LFTB that may be formulated into single servings of the ground beef purchased for the NSLP is 15 percent, which is similar to the composition found in many commercially available 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. Of the ground beef purchased by USDA in 2011 for the NSLP, LFTB comprised approximately 6.5 percent of the total volume.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration as well as the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) considers ammonium hydroxide as "generally recognized as safe." FSIS reviewed the suitability of Beef Products, Inc.'s (BPI) use of ammonium hydroxide in order to assess its effectiveness in performing the intended technical purpose of use, at the lowest level necessary, and to ensure that the product is not adulterated or misleading to consumers.

All USDA beef purchases for the NSLP and other Federal food and nutrition assistance programs meet very high food safety standards, which include stringent pathogen testing. Beef supplied by BPI as a component of the beef products purchased by USDA for the NSLP is subject to the same strict pathogen testing requirements for beef raw ingredients.

Additional information on this product or product specific inquiries should be directed to BPI at <http://www.beefproducts.com/>.

Food Distribution Division  
USDA Food and Nutrition Service

USDA Press Release found at this URL:  
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2012/03/0094.xml&contentidonly=true>

## News Release

---

Release No. 0094.12

Contact:

Office of Communications (202)720-4623

 [Printable version](#)

 [Email this page](#)

### **USDA Announces Additional Choices for Beef Products in the Upcoming School Year**

#### **USDA Affirms Safety of Lean Finely Textured Beef Product for Consumers**

WASHINGTON, March 15, 2012 – In response to requests from school districts across the country, the USDA announced today that it will offer more choices to schools in the National School Lunch Program when it comes to purchases of ground beef products.

USDA only purchases products for the school lunch program that are safe, nutritious and affordable – including all products containing Lean Finely Textured Beef. However, due to customer demand, the department will be adjusting procurement specifications for the next school year so schools can have additional options in procuring ground beef products. USDA will provide schools with a choice to order product either with or without Lean Finely Textured Beef.

USDA continues to affirm the safety of Lean Finely Textured Beef product for all consumers and urges customers to consult science based information on the safety and quality of this product. Lean Finely Textured Beef is a meat product derived from a process which separates fatty pieces from beef trimmings to reduce the overall fat content.

By law, USDA has two primary responsibilities as part of its mandate to provide safe and nutritious food to the American people. Through the Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA ensures that safety of the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products. Through the Food and Nutrition Service and the Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA provides food and nutrition assistance through several domestic programs, including the National School Lunch Program.

While USDA sets national nutritional guidelines for school meals, school districts make local decisions on what food to feed kids to meet these guidelines. On average, schools in the National School Lunch Program purchase approximately 20 percent of their food through USDA, and approximately 80 percent of food served is purchased directly by schools or school districts through private vendors. Schools purchase food from the department through the [USDA Foods Program](#), which provides more than 180 nutritious food items that are fresh, frozen, packaged, canned, dried, or in bulk. USDA procures these products based on the demand from schools to help meet the menu planning needs, student taste preferences, school nutrition goals, and local wellness initiatives.

USDA ensures all food purchased for the National School Lunch Program meet stringent food safety standards, which includes rigorous pathogen testing. Purchase specifications are continually reviewed, microbial test results are evaluated, new food safety technologies are considered, and food safety experts are consulted to determine the adequacy of our food safety requirements.

#

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).