

Fact Sheet
Lean Finely Textured Beef (LFTB)

- Secretary Vilsack has been clear that there is no mission more important to USDA than ensuring the health and safety of the food served to 31 million school children every day, and we are committed to a comprehensive, coordinated approach to food safety for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
- Because of USDA's existing interlocking rings of protection, there have been no foodborne outbreaks in schools associated with USDA-purchased products in over 10 years, and USDA foods are equal to, and often exceed, the quality of their commercial counterparts. 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 to produce a lean meat product that is added to ground beef to reduce the overall fat content without compromising flavor. It also has some degree of anti-microbial effect. 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 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.

Background Information on Ammonium Hydroxide

The Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Food and Drug Administration consider ammonium hydroxide as a “Generally Recognized As Safe” food additive. (For more information, see http://www.beefproducts.com/government_academic/ISU-Ammonium.pdf and <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/fcn/fcnDetailNavigation.cfm?rpt=scogsListing&id=27>)