

There were trade developments of note in several markets this week. Here is a brief summary of each:

Qatar

The FSIS Export Library states that the recommended shelf life for frozen beef and poultry products is twelve (12) months; for minced meats it is nine (9) months; for fresh beef it is 21 days; and for fresh mutton it is 14 days.

However, USAPEEC has been notified of recent issues for product with labels reflecting an 18-month shelf life. USDA brought this issue up with their Qatari counterparts and was informed that the accepted shelf life for frozen poultry meat is 12 months.

Importers can register frozen poultry with a longer shelf life, but this request will be studied on a case-by-case bases through the Qatari WATHEQ electronic system. So, it appears a 12-month shelf life is mandatory, and any increase will require prior permission supported by justification and studies.

Exporters should work closely with their importers to ensure all product will be accepted into the market.

Uruguay

In recent months, U.S. poultry destined for Uruguay has been experiencing disruptions, specifically with the issuing of import permits, prompting the region's USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) team to get involved.

On March 22 and 23, FAS Buenos Aires traveled to Montevideo, Uruguay to encourage local officials to allow entry of U.S. poultry products into the market. The FAS team met with Ambassador Fulton to brief her on the situation and to gain support to apply pressure.

On March 23, FAS met with 28 members of the UY Poultry Importers Association to learn about the history of the situation and the political challenges facing any resolution. A follow up to the meeting is scheduled for later this week where we hope things will move in the right direction.

Japan

In February, delegates from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) traveled to Japan for bilateral meetings with representatives of Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) on the protocols for HPAI restrictions between the two countries. As a result of those meetings, and subsequent follow-ups, it seems that Japan will now accept WOHAI guidelines for lifting restrictions 28 days post cleaning and disinfection of a zone, as opposed to their current 90-day policy. This amendment is expected to be signed and initiated in the first half of April.

While this is positive news, it seems that further communication will be needed before MAFF will align with the WOHAI definition of "poultry" and not impose trade restrictions due to detections in "non-poultry" flocks.