STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Aging Room Maintenance/Cleaning

FILE NAME: Location on your computer/company network

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LAST MODIFIED ON: 08/04/2014

EFFECTIVE DATE: Date of Approval

APPROVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The following individual is responsible for implementation of this SSOP and has overall authority on-site:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

* 1. Purpose

Provide an overview of the proper maintenance, cleaning, and conditions of aging rooms for cheese

* 1. Scope

 This SOP applies to anyone who is using the plant’s aging/curing/drying rooms to age cheese

1.3 Other Applicable References

Good Manufacturing Practices

SECTION 2: MATERIALS

2.1 Supplies

Stainless steel or food-grade plastic aging racks; mesh cheese mats; rack covers or drapes as required; disposable latex gloves or reusable rubber gloves; cleaning/sanitizing chemicals, water, and appropriate brushes; stainless steels bowls and cheese brushes as required.

SECTION 3: SAFETY/ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

3.1 Safety Considerations

Cleaning chemicals must be used with caution; always follow the instructions.

SECTION 4: FREQUENCY

4.1 Frequency

Cheese aging rooms are used whenever cheese needs to be matured prior to sale. Rooms are to be thoroughly cleaned whenever there is a break in aging to allow it, or when mold or soil is noticed on the walls or other surfaces. To thoroughly clean the aging room, cheese must be temporarily removed from the room until cleaning is complete. The floors of aging rooms should be rinsed and sanitized whenever they become soiled, or after each session of cheese washing/maintenance.

SECTION 5: RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 Task

Daily upkeep and cleaning of the cheese aging rooms is performed by any employees or cheesemakers using the aging room for their cheese. Daily notes on aging of the cheese are to be kept by the individual responsible for the cheese. These notes also include any cleaning performed.

* 1. Verification

The processor using the facility will record all necessary information on an Aging Sheet. This information includes: Aging room number; Date Cheese went into room; Style of Cheese/Cheese Company using the room; Target temperature and humidity; Deviations from the target temp/humidity and when corrected; Actions performed for the cheese (ie flipped, washed, etc); Cleaning or Sanitizing that is carried out.

* 1. Paperwork Review

The Plant Manager/PPS will regularly (weekly? Monthly?) review Aging Sheets and inspect aging rooms to ensure they are being maintained for cleanliness. The Plant Manager/PPS will also work with the cheese makers/those aging the cheese to combat quality issues (ie temperature problems, blue mold presence).

SECTION 6: PROCEDURE

6.1 Procedure for Aging Room Cleaning

When no cheese is present in the aging room, scrub all surfaces, beginning with the ceiling, then walls, then floors. Use chemical name and concentration along with brush colors/types. Rinse well with water, then sanitize using sanitizer name and concentration/brush color/type. Allow to dry before returning cheese to aging room.

Reinoculate walls/floors with cultures as needed after cleaning. Plant Manager/PPS will have instructions for this step.

As part of the plant environmental sampling plan, regular testing (Frequency) will occur of aging room drains and other critical control points, as determined by the Plant Manager/PPS.

Records are to be kept of aging room activity, cleaning, and environmental sampling, in order to address quality and safety issues if they arise.

6.2 Temperature/Humidity Measurement

Temperature recording equipment will be used to keep a record of daily temperature highs and lows in the aging room. Humidity should also be measured, to ensure it stays within the desired range. If the temperature or humidity is noted to be outside of the desired range, Plant Manager/PPS should be notified immediately so corrective steps can be taken.

\*\*\*For raw milk cheeses, keeping track of temperature daily is especially important.

6.3 Cheese Aging Racks/Shelving

Racks/shelves used to age cheese should be washed , sanitized, and thoroughly dried after use and before being used for new cheeses.

1. Washing Racks/Shelves

Use chemical name and concentration with temperature water and brush type (or COP system) to wash racks when they are dirty and before using for a new batch of cheese

1. Sanitizing Racks:

Using sanitizer name and concentration/contact time with temperature water and brush type/spray bottle, sanitize racks and cheese mats and allow to dry before use.

6.4 Cheese Aging Equipment/Accessories

Certain styles of cheese require regular washing or scrubbing to maintain natural rinds. Tools for this procedure must be washed after use, and sanitized before use, to prevent any contamination.

1. Washing Equipment:

Use chemical name and concentration to wash any Stainless steel pails, carts or shelves used to hold tools, cheese brushes, and any other equipment used in washing cheeses immediately after use. Place on draining rack to air dry

1. Sanitizing Equipment:

Before use, sanitize any equipment to be used in aging, turning or washing cheese with sanitizer name and concentration for contact time.

1. Always wear disposable latex or clean, sanitized, reusable rubber gloves when handling cheese.