



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



CIVIL DIVISION

JUL 9 1969

Dear Mr. Leannartson:

We are making a survey of the meat inspection and grading activities of the Consumer and Marketing Service (CMS). As a part of the survey, we are visiting selected slaughtering and processing plants within the Central Consumer Protection Region. The results of our work will be discussed with CMS officials at the completion of our survey. At Beverly's Independent Packing Company, Salina, Kansas, however, we observed unsanitary conditions that appear to be of such a serious nature as to warrant our bringing the matter to your attention prior to the completion of our survey. In addition, our visit to this plant gave rise to questions concerning CMS's responsibilities with respect to nonfederally inspected plants in general.

Beverly's Independent Packing Company was visited, on June 10, 1969, by members of our staff who were accompanied by the Officer in Charge of the Wichita Circuit, CMS. The plant slaughters and processes cattle under the State of Kansas meat inspection program. Although the plant is not subject to Federal inspection, Federal grading has been provided in accordance with the Agricultural Marketing Act, 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621). In this connection, nonfederally inspected plants receiving Federal grading services are periodically surveyed by consumer protection personnel to assure that the plants comply with inspection and sanitation requirements.

Listed below are some of the more serious conditions we observed:

- a. Rat feces were observed throughout the plant including beef boning areas and carcass coolers.
- b. Rats had chewed holes in the wooden cooler doors.
- c. Rat nests and bird nests were observed in the plant.
- d. A live rat was observed in the tank house.
- e. Moldy meat scraps were accumulated behind a refrigerator unit in the cooler. Two packages of moldy meat were lying on a work table in the boning room.

092695

7/14/69

092695

6A000451

f. Work tables and equipment were dirty. In general, floors, walls, ceiling and loading docks were dirty.

g. Open doors and windows were not screened.

Also, during the visit the Officer in Charge observed the ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection procedures followed by the State meat inspector. His inspection report indicated that, had he not questioned the State inspector on one carcass, the inspector would have improperly accepted the carcass as wholesome. The carcass was subsequently condemned by the State contract veterinarian.

Comments by the plant manager indicated that unsanitary conditions at the plant have existed for some time. During a meeting at the conclusion of our visit, the plant manager stated that the rat problem had improved because in the past he had seen about 300 rats a day and now he sees only one or two rats a day. He stated also that in the past he had thrown away carcasses because the rats had eaten part of the carcasses during the night.

Following our visit, the Officer in Charge notified the Slaughter Inspection Division, Washington, D. C., that consideration should be given to suspending or withdrawing grading services from this plant, since in his opinion, it could not presently produce a wholesome product. As a result, meat grading service was removed from the plant on June 17, 1969. This action, however, apparently will not preclude continued slaughtering and processing of meat by the plant under the same unsanitary conditions for sale to the consuming public.

The Wholesome Meat Act (21 U.S.C. 661(c)(1)) provides that the Secretary of Agriculture can prevent the sale of meat by a nonfederally inspected plant if it is determined that the plant is producing adulterated meat which would clearly endanger the public health.

In view of the conditions noted above and the expressed opinion of the Officer in Charge that the plant presently could not produce a wholesome product, we would like to be advised whether the plant meets the requirements for continued operation under the Wholesome Meat Act.

With regard to nonfederally inspected plants in general, we would appreciate receiving your comments on the following matters:

1. In order to be eligible to receive Federal grading services, does a nonfederally inspected plant have to meet the same standards for inspection and sanitation as federally inspected plants?

2. Has the responsibility, relating to the closing of plants producing adulterated meat which would endanger the public health, been delegated to CIMS field personnel? Also what responsibility does CIMS field personnel, particularly those meat grading and meat inspection personnel performing services at nonfederally inspected plants, have for making recommendations to their supervisors for the closing of such plants?
3. What procedures have been established for the detection of plants producing adulterated meat which would endanger the public health, especially those plants not receiving grading services?

We will be pleased to discuss these matters with you or members of your staff if you desire. Also we would appreciate being advised of any actions you plan to take with respect to the matters discussed in this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Arland N. Berry
for Victor L. Lowe
Associate Director

Mr. Roy W. Leannartson, Administrator
Consumer and Marketing Service
Department of Agriculture