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Austin American-Statesman

August 22, 1997

SECTION: News; Pg. A1

LENGTH: 832 words

HEADLINE: Nebraska meat plant shut down over E. coli; Meat-processing plant

BYLINE: Rick Weiss and Caroline Mayer

BODY:

A major meat-processing company already under federal investigation for its recent distribution of tainted hamburgers is shutting its Nebraska beef-processing facility indefinitely and recalling all burgers shipped from the plant, estimated to be 25 million pounds, Agriculture Department and company officials announced Thursday.

The enormous nationwide recall, the largest by far in U.S. history, was a non-negotiable'' recommendation from the government, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said. It was put to the plant's owner, Hudson Foods Inc. of Rogers, Ark., after federal inspectors uncovered evidence that the company's meat processing, bacterial testing and bookkeeping procedures were inadequate to ensure that its products were safe.

Enough new information has come to light so we are ready to take action,'' Glickman said.

The move expands upon a 1.2 million-pound hamburger recall at the same plant, announced Friday. That recall was ordered after federal investigators determined that Hudson hamburgers produced during three days in June had caused 16 cases of food poisoning in Colorado.

In a statement Thursday, Hudson Foods said it was closing the plant and initiating the recall out of an abundance of caution and to restore the public confidence.''

Cathie Woteki, undersecretary for food safety, urged consumers to check their freezers for any Hudson Foods frozen hamburgers and return them to the place of purchase. All Hudson products are labeled with an establishment number, '' which is 13569.

The company's burgers are carried by such national chains as Burger King, Wal-Mart, Boston Market, Sam's Club and Safeway.

Burger King announced it would immediately pull all Hudson products from its restaurants. About 25 percent of Burger King outlets carry Hudson beef products, and some of those restaurants may experience temporary shortages of burgers, the company said.

Boston Market ordered Hudson patties pulled from its 1,200 stores. The patties will be out of our stores within the next 15 minutes,'' said Jeff Glickman, Boston Market's public-relations director, just an hour after

Austin American-Statesman, August 22, 1997

Thursday's 2:30 news conference.

Beckman said 40 percent of its stores used Hudson beef from the Columbus, Neb., plant to make meat loaf. For a time, he said, meat loaf will not be available at the affected eateries.

Glickman said the Agriculture Department was moved to recommend closure of Hudson's plant in Columbus, Neb., and a total recall after inspectors learned that the company had a practice of saving leftover raw meat not used in the burger-making operation on one day and adding it to batches of raw meat used to make burgers the next day. That method makes it increasingly difficult with each day to keep track of whether any leftovers from a contaminated batch have made their way into subsequent batches.

The problem was exacerbated by inadequate bookkeeping methods for tracking various lots of beef, said Thomas Billy, administrator of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service. Billy said the agency also was concerned that the company's testing for bacterial contamination has been inadequate.

A separate investigation for possible criminal activity is still under way, said USDA Inspector General Roger Viadero. That investigation was initiated after a USDA audit last week determined that the company's initial estimate of the amount of meat that may have been contaminated in June was short by more than a million pounds.

Billy said the department was now fairly certain that the contamination, caused by a potentially deadly bacterium called E. coli O157:H7, originated in raw meat provided to Hudson from one of seven suppliers. When the culprit supplier is identified definitively, he said, investigators will follow up to see whether that company also shipped contaminated products to other processing facilities.

That investigation could lead to additional recalls, officials said.

Billy said Colorado public-health officials and scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta are looking into new cases of E. coli poisoning in two Colorado families who recently fell ill after eating hamburgers produced at the Hudson plant on June 16.

If DNA fingerprinting studies show a match between the disease-causing bacteria in those people and bacteria in hamburgers saved from the families' freezers, then the scope of contamination from the Hudson plant would be larger than previously recognized. The 16 cases that have been linked so far to Hudson were all tied to burgers produced earlier in the month.

(From Box)

For More Information

Consumers who have any Hudson Foods frozen beef patties or burgers should return the items to their point of purchase for a refund. For questions, call the U.S. Department of Agriculture at (800) 535-0455 or Hudson Foods at (800) 777-2670.

APHIC: Workers process beef Monday at the Hudson Foods Inc. plant in Columbus, Neb., that was closed Thursday due to contamination concerns.

LOAD-DATE: August 23, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 29 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 Capital-Gazette Communications, Inc. The
Capital (Annapolis, MD.)

August 22, 1997, Friday

SECTION: Front; Pg. A1

LENGTH: 966 words

HEADLINE: Beef recall largest in US history

BYLINE: KNIGHT-RIDDER NEWS

BODY:

WASHINGTON The largest meat recall in U.S. history began yesterday as the beef company linked to the latest outbreak of E. coli-tainted hamburgers agreed to pull off the market and destroy 25 million pounds of ground beef.

Under intense pressure from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hudson Foods Co. also agreed yesterday to shut down its plant in Columbus, Neb., and not reopen it until the company erases all the government's doubts that its processes are safe.

The ground beef being recalled was processed in June and some may already have been eaten. But because it's in the form of frozen patties, USDA officials believe much of it may still be stored by wholesalers, distributors, grocers and staurants around the country.

The plant's major customers include Safeway, Wal-Mart, Burger King, Sam's Club and Boston Market, officials said.

A smaller amount of Hudson's beef was recalled last week.

About 20 people in Colorado got sick from the potentially deadly E. coli bacteria starting in June. No one has been reported sick since mid-July.

E. coli is a potentially deadly bacteria that often gets into food through contact with fecal matter. It causes severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration and was blamed for three deaths and hundreds of illnesses in Washington state in 1993, mainly because of undercooked burgers.

Federal food-safety experts were still trying to find the cause of the latest outbreak, which was traced to boxes of four-ounce beef patties produced at Hudson's Nebraska plant. Officials now believe the beef was contaminated with fecal matter at one of Hudson's supplier slaughterhouses, and the contamination was spread during the grinding at the hamburger plant.

One of the difficulties, the USDA said, is that Hudson used meat left over from one day's grinding in the next day's work.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced the plant's shutdown, stressing at the company's action was voluntary, but came under threat of government retaliation. Mr. Glickman said USDA officials presented Hudson with a list of "non-negotiable" requirements.

The Capital (Annapolis, MD.), August 22, 1997

"I am well aware that I do not have the authority to order these recommendations," Mr. Glickman said. "But I do have the authority to withdraw inspectors. If necessary, I will do that to halt operations until I'm comfortable telling the American people that this food is safe."

Without the federal inspectors' labels, the meat could not be sold in U.S. stores.

Yesterday's recall highlighted weaknesses in the nation's meat safety system, which hasn't been significantly modernized since the 1930s. Though government inspectors look at meat as it passes through slaughterhouses and processing plants, there's no inspection for invisible and potentially dangerous bacteria, such as E. coli.

The quickest test for E. coli takes at least three days to complete, said microbiologist Hans Blaschek of the University of Illinois. By that time, potentially contaminated meat is far away, perhaps on consumers' dinner tables. And once an outbreak is discovered, the government cannot order a recall of tainted meat.

The USDA is phasing in a series of common-sense changes in its inspection system that should reduce contamination, but won't make it any easier to see it when it does occur. In the meantime, the government recommends that consumers cook meat until it registers 160 degrees. At that temperature, all the dangerous microbes are killed.

Mr. Blaschek said the USDA used to tell consumers to cook meat until it was brown in the middle, but recently the agency discovered that some disease microorganisms can still be present even if the meat looks thoroughly cooked. Checking each burger with a thermometer is the only way to be sure it's safe, the agency said.

"That's not something anybody I know is going to do," Mr. Blaschek said. He suggested consumers just use common sense and not worry too much, since E. coli contamination remains relatively rare.

The USDA estimates that E. coli and other food-borne bacteria cause an estimated 4,000 deaths and 5 million illnesses per year.

The E. coli bacteria are commonly found in human intestines.

Scientists discovered its toxic form in 1982, and the microorganism gained notoriety in a 1993 outbreak that began at a Seattle Jack-in-the-Box, sickening several hundred people and killing three children.

The bacteria produce a toxin that damages the colon, causing a painful bloody diarrhea. In severe cases, they can shut down the kidneys and destroy blood cells. It's rarely fatal, but children and the elderly are at greatest risk.

Consumer groups like Safe Tables Our Priority, which was formed by the victims of the 1993 outbreak, say many of these illnesses could be prevented if the government conducted more stringent inspections and tests, and if the USDA had the authority to shut down problem plants and recall suspect meat.

The Capital (Annapolis, MD.), August 22, 1997

STOP and other consumer groups said they support Mr. Glickman's actions. Dale Moore, a spokesman for the National Cattlemen's Association, said his organization does too.

"The safety of the beef supply is pretty important to our industry," he said.

Mr. Glickman told reporters yesterday that he'll go back to Congress seeking new authority to regulate the industry. And Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., chairman of the House subcommittee that oversees food safety, said he'll hold hearings in the fall on the need for new regulations.

Mr. Blaschek said he found a box of the suspect Hudson burgers in his freezer and returned them to the grocery store for a refund.

"Statistically, the odds are against you getting exposed to the microorganism from hamburgers, but you don't want to play the odds with people's children," he said. "That's why I took them back."

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 30 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 Charleston Newspapers
The Charleston Gazette

August 22, 1997, Friday

SECTION: News; Pg. P3A

LENGTH: 367 words

HEADLINE: Meat recall now huge ; plant closed

BODY:

WASHINGTON (AP) - A Nebraska plant that produced possibly hazardous hamburger patties has been closed and is recalling an estimated 25 million pounds of the product, a huge leap in the possible scope of the contamination.

E. coli bacteria contamination originated outside the plant, at the slaughterhouse, but the massive recall is needed because of problems with meat handling, record keeping and safety testing at the operation, Agriculture Department officials said Thursday.

The Columbus, Neb., plant will not open until the company has adopted "far more stringent safety standards that we have specifically laid out for them based on what we have found in our investigation," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said.

The announcement means the recall is growing 20-fold from Aug. 15 to cover all patties ever made by the plant that are still believed to be in the marketplace.

Officials said it was the department's largest recall.

It is a small fraction of the 8 billion pounds of ground beef produced in the country each year. And the Columbus plant accounts for less than 7 percent of Hudson Food's sales, the company said.

Glickman said fewer than 20 people are known to have gotten sick from the tainted meat.

The Charleston Gazette, August 22, 1997

"We continue to monitor the situation very closely, but all the evidence at this point indicates that we have contained the outbreak," he said.

Recalls were announced last week, first with 20,000 pounds of meat, then another 20,000, and on Aug. 15 it became 1.2 million pounds. The initial Hudson recall began after health officials in Colorado traced the illnesses of more than a dozen people to hamburger patties they ate in early June.

The Agriculture Department has evidence that the contamination occurred not in the plant but at one or more of the slaughterhouses that supply it, said Tom Billy, administrator of department's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Officials are looking at the seven slaughterhouses that were known to have supplied the plant on June 5, he said

They are "now satisfied no indication of contamination occurred in the plant itself," Billy said.

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 32 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Columbian Publishing Co.
The Columbian (Vancouver, WA.)

August 22, 1997, Friday

SECTION: C section; Pg. 8

LENGTH: 425 words

HEADLINE: BURGER EATERS WON'T HAVE IT THEIR WAY FOR A WHILE

BYLINE: By SCOTT BAUER ; Associated Press writer

BODY:

COLUMBUS, Neb. -- Some burger fans couldn't have it their way today after Hudson Foods announced they were shutting a plant and recalling 25 million pounds of possibly tainted beef. Burger King said hundreds of restaurants were affected.

Hudson Foods called for the recall and agreed to close the plant Thursday in an agreement with the Agriculture Department, which said more stringent safety standards were needed there even though the beef was contaminated elsewhere.

The impact of the massive recall was felt immediately. Some Boston Market restaurants were left without meatloaf.

Burger King said 1,650 restaurants were initially affected, a quarter of its more than 6,000 restaurants, and 700 still were without hamburger today. The chains got rush deliveries from other suppliers.

Apparently the tainted meat has not affected the Northwest. Spokespeople for Burger King franchises in the Clark County-Portland area and Safeway Inc. say Hudson Foods isn't a supplier for local stores. Boston Market said its Washington and Oregon stores are not affected by the meat.

At a Burger King in Des Moines, Iowa, a sign on the drive-through menu said: "Sorry, only thing available today is chicken, fish, pork products and fries." In Omaha, Burger King managers planned to serve ham and cheese and bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches for lunch.

"I guess it's a case of it's better to be safe than sorry," Terri Spahn, a customer at a Burger King in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, said late Thursday. Burger King said the affected restaurants were in 28 states, essentially everything but the East and West Coasts, Alaska and Hawaii.

Other major customers of the plant include Safeway, Wal-Mart and Boston Market, officials said.

Employees at the 2-year-old plant in this town 70 miles west of Omaha defended their workplace.

"We're all sticking together and we're all behind Hudson," said Dan Hull, who makes hamburger patties. More than 200 employees were without jobs, but Hudson said they would continue to receive pay.

The Columbian (Vancouver, WA.), August 22, 1997

The recall began after health officials traced the illnesses of more than a dozen people in Colorado to hamburger patties they ate in early June.

E. coli bacteria contamination originated at a slaughterhouse -- outside the plant -- but the recall is needed because of problems with meat handling, record keeping and safety testing, Agriculture Department officials said.

The plant will not open until the company has adopted "far more stringent safety standards," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said.

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 33 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Dallas Morning News
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

August 22, 1997, Friday, HOME FINAL EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 794 words

HEADLINE: 25 million pounds of beef recalled;
Nebraska plant to close after E. coli outbreak

BYLINE: Knight-Ridder Newspapers

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

WASHINGTON - The largest meat recall in U.S. history began Thursday as the beef company linked to the latest outbreak of E. coli-tainted hamburgers agreed to pull off the market and destroy 25 million pounds of ground beef.

Under intense pressure from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hudson Foods Co. also agreed Thursday to shut down its plant in Columbus, Neb., and not reopen it until the company erases all the government's doubts that its processes are safe.

The ground beef being recalled was processed in June, and some may already have been eaten. But because it's in the form of frozen patties, USDA officials believe much of it may still be stored by wholesalers, distributors, grocers and restaurants around the country.

A smaller amount of Hudson's beef was recalled last week.

The Hudson products - all bearing establishment No. 13569 - were distributed to grocery stores, fast-food chains and warehouse outlets, including Sam's Clubs (owned by Wal-Mart), Burger King and Boston Market.

USDA officials suggested that consumers check their freezers for any Hudson products and return them to the retailer for a refund.

About 20 people in Colorado got sick from the potentially deadly E. coli bacteria starting in June. No one has been reported sick since mid-July.

The bacteria cause severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration.

Three children died in a larger outbreak in the Pacific Northwest in 1993.

Burger King and Boston Market announced they would immediately pull all Hudson products from their restaurants. Wal-Mart officials said they pulled all Hudson ground beef off shelves last week.

Federal food-safety experts were still trying to find the cause of the latest outbreak, which was traced to boxes of 4-ounce beef patties produced at Hudson's Nebraska plant. Officials now believe the beef was contaminated with fecal matter at one of Hudson's supplier slaughterhouses, and the contamination was

read during the grinding at the hamburger plant.

One of the difficulties, the USDA said, is that Hudson used meat left over from one day's grinding in the next day's work.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced the plant's shutdown, stressing that the company's action was voluntary but came under threat of government retaliation. Mr. Glickman said that USDA officials presented Hudson with a list of non-negotiable requirements.

"I am well aware that I do not have the authority to order these recommendations," Mr. Glickman said. "But I do have the authority to withdraw inspectors. If necessary, I will do that to halt operations until I'm comfortable telling the American people that this food is safe."

Without the federal inspectors' labels, the meat could not be sold in U.S. stores.

Thursday's recall highlighted weaknesses in the nation's meat safety system, which has not been significantly modernized since the 1930s. Though government inspectors look at meat as it passes through slaughterhouses and processing plants, no inspection is made for invisible and potentially dangerous bacteria such as E. coli.

The quickest test for E. coli takes at least three days to complete, said microbiologist Hans Blaschek of the University of Illinois. By that time, essentially contaminated meat is far away, perhaps on consumers' dinner tables. And once an outbreak is discovered, the government cannot order a recall of tainted meat.

The USDA is phasing in a series of common-sense changes in its inspection system that should reduce contamination.

In the meantime, the government recommends that consumers cook meat until it registers 160 degrees. At that temperature, all the dangerous microbes are killed.

Checking each burger with a thermometer is the only way to be sure it's safe, the USDA said.

"That's not something anybody I know is going to do," Mr. Blaschek said. He suggested consumers just use common sense and not worry too much, since E. coli contamination remains relatively rare.

The USDA estimates that E. coli and other food-borne bacteria cause 4,000 deaths and 5 million illnesses per year.

Mr. Glickman told reporters Thursday he will ask Congress for new authority to regulate the industry. And Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., chairman of the House subcommittee that oversees food safety, said he will hold hearings in the fall on the need for new regulations.

Separately Wednesday, Bloomberg News reported that the Agriculture Department recalling chicken nuggets and patties from schools in 33 states because they contain dioxin.

Officials at the USDA, which is calling the recall a precautionary measure, aren't immediately available to elaborate. A spokeswoman said she had no information on the amount of chicken recalled or where it originated.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO(S): (Associated Press) The Hudson Foods Co. meat processing plant in Columbus, Neb., is shutting down until more stringent safety standards are instituted.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 26, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 35 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Detroit News, Inc.
The Detroit News

August 22, 1997, Friday

SECTION: Front; Pg. Pg. A1

LENGTH: 717 words

HEADLINE: Hamburger scare hits state

BYLINE: By Bradley A. Stertz / Detroit News Washington Bureau Chief

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- Ordering meat loaf at Metro Detroit's 37 Boston Market stores will be impossible, at least for another week. Grabbing a Burger King Whopper might get dicey. Michigan's 44 Wal-Marts and 21 Sam's Clubs have pulled frozen, pre-formed hamburger patties from their shelves.

Most of the ground beef suspected of being tainted with potentially deadly E. coli bacteria in Michigan and 47 other states is being sent back to the Nebraska company that shipped it.

The recall, estimated to be about 25 million pounds, is the largest in U.S. history, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials said Thursday.

The major outlets in Michigan for the frozen meat -- restaurant chains Boston Market and Burger King, along with Wal-Mart -- reacted quickly to a USDA announcement Thursday recalling ground beef produced by a Hudson Foods Inc. processing plant. The plant in Columbus, Neb., also was ordered closed.

"This could possibly be anywhere," Steve Lombardi, a USDA official said. "You can assume that it could be in any supermarket."

Major Michigan chains, including Farmer Jack and Meijer, said they didn't carry Hudson Foods beef. However, many smaller outlets may have received the meat.

Wal-Mart said it hasn't sold the patties since Aug. 13, but it will accept customer returns of any ground beef from Hudson Foods. The meat recall doesn't affect fresh ground beef sold in Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores.

Restaurants affected by the recall also sought to quell public fears.

"We pulled all of the meat loaf out of our stores in 1 1/2 hours after hearing about the recall," said Bill Sullivan, chief financial officer of B.C. Great Lakes, the Chicago owner of Boston Market franchises in Michigan and Ohio.

"No tainted beef has been discovered in Burger King stores," said a spokesman at company headquarters in Miami. "But if the USDA says it doesn't have confidence in a meat processing plant, neither do we."

The Nebraska plant will not reopen until the company has adopted "far more stringent safety standards that we have specifically laid out for them based on what we have found in our investigation," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman

The Detroit News, August 22, 1997

id.

"We continue to monitor the situation very closely, but all the evidence at this point indicates that we have contained the outbreak."

Glickman said the department recommended closing Hudson's Columbus, Neb., plant and a total recall after inspectors learned the company had a practice of saving leftover raw meat not used in the burger-making operation on one day and adding it to batches of raw meat used to make burgers the next day.

That method made it hard to keep track of leftovers that might have contaminated subsequent batches.

Last week, the company began the recall, first with 20,000 pounds. Last Friday, the recall grew to include 1.2 million pounds of hamburger.

The initial Hudson recall began after health officials in Colorado traced the illnesses of more than a dozen people to hamburger patties they ate in early June. E. coli contamination is suspected.

E. coli is a potentially deadly bacteria that often gets into food through contact with fecal matter. It causes severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration, and was blamed for three deaths and hundreds of illnesses in Washington state in 1993, mainly because of undercooked hamburgers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which investigated the E. coli outbreak associated with the patties in Colorado, said Thursday that 15 people became ill between June 14 and July 14, five of whom were hospitalized. Seven said they had eaten frozen patties, and eight specifically remembered eating Hudson Foods patties.

Detroit News wire services contributed to this report.

Hudson Foods meat patties are distributed nationwide to retail grocery stores and wholesale outlets.

How to find the meat: Suspect 3-pound packages containing 12 patties and 15-pound boxes with 60 patties bear the coding USDA EST.-13569, indicating the product was produced in Hudson's Columbus, Neb., plant.

Major Michigan outlets: Hudson products are sold by Wal-Mart stores and Sam's Club outlets, Burger King and Boston Market restaurants.

Where to call: You can call the USDA hotline at (800) 535-4555 or Hudson's hotline at (800) 447-2670.

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 36 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Durham Herald Co.
The Herald-Sun (Durham, N.C.)

August 22, 1997, Friday

SECTION: Front; Pg. A1;

LENGTH: 859 words

HEADLINE: E. coli threat spurs record beef recall
Hudson Foods agrees to destroy 25 million pounds of hamburger

BYLINE: HEATHER DEWAR and DAVID GOLDSTEIN Knight-Ridder

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- The largest meat recall in U.S. history began Thursday as the beef company linked to the latest outbreak of E. coli-tainted hamburgers agreed to pull off the market and destroy 25 million pounds of ground beef.

Under intense pressure from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hudson Foods Co. also agreed Thursday to shut down its plant in Columbus, Neb., and not reopen it until the company erases all the government's doubts that its processes are safe.

The ground beef being recalled was processed in June and some may already have been eaten. But because it's in the form of frozen patties, USDA officials believe much of it may still be stored by wholesalers, distributors, grocers and restaurants nationwide.

A smaller amount of Hudson's beef was recalled last week.

About 20 people in Colorado got sick from the potentially deadly E. coli bacteria starting in June. No one has been reported sick since mid-July.

The bacteria causes severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration.

Three children died in a larger outbreak in the Pacific Northwest in 1993.

Federal food-safety experts were still trying to find the cause of the latest outbreak, which was traced to boxes of four-ounce beef patties produced at Hudson's Nebraska plant. Officials now believe the beef was contaminated with fecal matter at one of Hudson's supplier slaughterhouses, and the contamination was spread during the grinding at the hamburger plant.

One of the difficulties, the USDA said, is that Hudson used meat left over from one day's grinding in the next day's work.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced the plant's shutdown, stressing that the company's action was voluntary, but came under threat of government action. He said USDA officials presented Hudson with a list of "non-negotiable" requirements.

"I am well aware that I do not have the authority to order these commendations," Glickman said. "But I do have the authority to withdraw inspectors. If necessary, I will do that to halt operations until I'm

The Herald-Sun (Durham, N.C.), August 22, 1997

uncomfortable telling the American people that this food is safe."

Without the federal inspectors' labels, the meat could not be sold in U.S. stores.

Thursday's recall highlighted weaknesses in the nation's meat safety system, which has not been significantly modernized since the 1930s. Though government inspectors look at meat as it passes through slaughterhouses and processing plants, there is no inspection for invisible and potentially dangerous bacteria, such as E. coli.

The quickest test for E. coli takes at least three days to complete, said microbiologist Hans Blaschek of the University of Illinois. By that time, potentially contaminated meat is far away, perhaps on consumers' dinner tables. And once an outbreak is discovered, the government cannot order a recall of tainted meat.

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"That's not something anybody I know is going to do," Blaschek said. He suggested consumers just use common sense and not worry too much, since E. coli contamination remains relatively rare.

The USDA estimates that E. coli and other food-borne bacteria cause an estimated 4,000 deaths and 5 million illnesses per year.

The E. coli bacteria are commonly found in human intestines.

Scientists discovered its toxic form in 1982, and the microorganism gained notoriety in a 1993 outbreak that began at a Seattle Jack-in-the-Box, sickening several hundred people and killing three children.

The bacteria produce a toxin that damages the colon, causing a painful bloody diarrhea. In severe cases, it can shut down the kidneys and destroy blood cells. It is rarely fatal, but children and the elderly are at greatest risk.

Consumer groups like Safe Tables Our Priority (STOP), which was formed by the victims of the 1993 outbreak, say many of these illnesses could be prevented if the government conducted more stringent inspections and tests, and if the USDA had the authority to shut down problem plants and recall suspect meat.

STOP and other consumer groups said they support Glickman's actions. Dale Fore, a spokesman for the National Cattleman's Association, said his organization does too. "The safety of the beef supply is pretty important to our industry," he said.

The Herald-Sun (Durham, N.C.), August 22, 1997

Glickman told reporters he will go back to Congress seeking new authority to regulate the industry. And Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., chairman of the House subcommittee that oversees food safety, said he will hold hearings in the fall on the need for new regulations.

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 37 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Houston Chronicle Publishing Company
The Houston Chronicle

August 22, 1997, Friday, 3 STAR Edition

SECTION: a; Pg. 2

LENGTH: 903 words

HEADLINE: Packing plant shut as beef recall hits 25 million pounds

BYLINE: Houston Chronicle News Services

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

WASHINGTON - A major meat-processing company already under federal investigation for its recent distribution of tainted hamburgers is shutting down its Nebraska beef-processing facility indefinitely and recalling all burgers shipped from the plant, estimated to be about 25 million pounds, Agriculture Department and company officials announced Thursday.

The enormous nationwide recall, the largest by far in U.S. history, was a "non-negotiable" recommendation from the government, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said. It was it to the plant's owner, Hudson Foods of Rogers, Ark., after federal inspectors uncovered evidence that the company's meat processing, bacterial testing and bookkeeping procedures were inadequate to assure that its products were safe.

"Enough new information has come to light so we are ready to take action," Glickman said at a hastily called news conference.

The move expands upon a 1.2 million-pound hamburger recall at the same plant, announced last Friday. That recall was ordered after federal investigators determined that Hudson hamburgers produced during three days in June had caused 16 cases of food poisoning in Colorado.

In a statement released Thursday, Hudson Foods said it was closing the plant and initiating the recall "out of an abundance of caution and to restore the public confidence."

Undersecretary for Food Safety Cathie Woteki urged consumers to check their freezers for any Hudson Foods frozen hamburgers and return them to the place of purchase. All Hudson products are labeled with an "establishment number," which is 13569.

The company's burgers are carried by such national chains as Burger King, Wal-Mart, Boston Market, Sam's Club and Safeway.

The Houston Chronicle, August 22, 1997

Burger King announced it would immediately pull all Hudson products from its restaurants. About 25 percent of Burger King outlets carry Hudson beef products, and some of those restaurants may experience temporary shortages of burgers, the company said in a statement.

Boston Market ordered Hudson patties pulled from all of its 1,200 stores. "The patties will be out of our stores within the next 15 minutes," said Jeff Beckman, Boston Market's public-relations director, just an hour after the 2:30 news conference.

Beckman said 40 percent of its stores used Hudson beef from the Columbus, Neb., plant to make meatloaf. For a time, he said, meatloaf will not be available at the affected eateries.

Beckman said no Boston Market restaurants in Texas had meat from the Nebraska plant.

Officials at the Defense Commissary Agency, which supplies the 300 military commissaries around the world, issued a notice ordering that the "offending Hudson beef products" be removed from sale.

A Safeway spokeswoman in Oakland, Calif., said only one division in the country - the Denver stores - did business with Hudson Foods and that the division removed all of the company's beef from its stores Aug. 12, the day the first recall was announced.

Although the patties had been carried by Sam's Club, a division of Wal-Mart, a spokeswoman for the retailing giant said all Hudson ground beef was pulled off shelves at the warehouse stores last week.

Glickman said the department was moved to recommend closure of Hudson's Columbus, Neb., plant and a total recall after inspectors learned that the company had a practice of saving leftover raw meat not used in the burger-making operation on one day and adding it to batches of raw meat used to make burgers the next day. That method makes it increasingly difficult with each day to keep track of whether any leftovers from a contaminated batch have made their way into subsequent batches.

The problem was exacerbated by inadequate bookkeeping methods for tracking the fate of various lots of beef, said Thomas Billy, administrator of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service, which is directing the food-safety arm of the Hudson investigation. Billy said the agency also was "concerned" that the company's testing for bacterial contamination has been inadequate.

The Houston Chronicle, August 22, 1997

A separate investigation for possible criminal activity is continuing, said USDA Inspector General Roger Viadero. That probe was initiated after a USDA audit last week determined that the company's initial estimate of the amount of meat that may have been contaminated in June was short by more than a million pounds.

Billy said the department was now fairly certain that the contamination, caused by a potentially deadly bacterium called E. coli O157:H7, originated in raw meat provided to Hudson from one of seven suppliers. When the culprit supplier is identified definitively, he said, investigators will follow up to see if that company also shipped contaminated products to other processing facilities.

That investigation could lead to additional recalls, officials said.

Billy said the beef plant would not reopen until the company presents the USDA with an acceptable plan for testing its raw meat and revamps its record-keeping and product-coding system in a way that will allow better tracking of product lots.

Consumers wanting more information about the recall were urged to call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 800-535-4555. Woteki said the hot line took a record 6,000 calls last weekend after the agency announced its expanded call.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 26, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 41 OF 69 STORIES

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News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

August 22, 1997, Friday, ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: TRIAD/STATE, Pg. B5

LENGTH: 638 words

HEADLINE: BURGER RECALL'S SCOPE INCREASES; PLANT IS CLOSED;
A MOUNTAIN OF MEAT MAY BE CONTAMINATED

BYLINE: The Associated Press

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

A Nebraska plant that produced possibly hazardous hamburger patties has been closed and is recalling an estimated 25 million pounds of the product.

The latest recall estimate represented a huge leap in the possible scope of the contamination.

E. coli bacteria contamination originated outside the plant at the slaughterhouse, but the massive recall is needed because of problems with meat handling, record keeping and safety testing at the operation, Agriculture Department officials said Thursday.

The Columbus, Neb., plant will not open until the company has adopted "far more stringent safety standards that we have specifically laid out for them based on what we have found in our investigation," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said.

The announcement means the size of the recall has grown about 20-fold since last Friday. Hudson Foods said in a statement that it ordered the recall "out of an abundance of caution and to restore the public confidence."

Glickman said fewer than 20 people are known to have gotten sick from the tainted meat.

"We continue to monitor the situation very closely, but all the evidence at this point indicates that we have contained the outbreak," he said.

Recalls were announced last week, first of 20,000 pounds of meat, then another 20,000, until on Friday it became 1.2 million pounds.

The USDA has evidence that the contamination occurred not in the plant but at one or more of the slaughterhouses that supply it, said Tom Billy, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Officials are looking at the seven slaughterhouses that were known to have supplied the plant on June 5, he said.

They are "now satisfied no indication of contamination occurred in the plant itself," Billy said.

News & Record (Greensboro, NC), August 22, 1997

Glickman said the main reason the recall is being expanded was that USDA officials on Thursday morning discovered problems in the plant's procedures. Specifically, he said, investigators discovered the plant had a practice of using leftover raw meat from one day in the next day's production.

That has made it difficult to know when the last of the tainted meat left the plant, officials said.

E. coli is a potentially deadly bacteria that often gets into food through contact with fecal matter. It can cause severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration, and was blamed for three deaths and hundreds of illnesses in Washington state in 1993, mainly because of undercooked burgers.

Officials stressed that people should thoroughly cook hamburger, using a meat thermometer to make sure it reaches at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which investigated the E. coli outbreak associated with the patties in Colorado, said Thursday that 15 people became ill between June 14 and July 14, five of whom were hospitalized.

Eleven said they had eaten frozen patties, and eight specifically remembered eating Hudson Foods patties, the CDC said.

The CDC said the Hudson patties may have been distributed to all 48 contiguous states.

The plant's major customers include Safeway, Wal-Mart, Burger King, Sam's Club and Boston Market, officials said.

The initial Hudson recall began after health officials in Colorado traced the illnesses of more than a dozen people to hamburger patties they ate in early June.

Consumers were advised to return all Hudson Foods brand frozen beef patties with Establishment No. 13569 printed inside the USDA inspection seal and to check with restaurants to make sure they are not using the suspect meat.

People can call the USDA hotline for information at (800) 535-4555, or Hudson's hotline at (800) 447-2670. "We are doing our best to cooperate fully with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and will continue to do so," Hudson Foods chairman James Hudson said.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Wilfredo Lee, The Associated Press Hudson Foods' meat processing plant in Columbus, Neb., suspected in an outbreak of E. coli contamination, is shutting down until more stringent safety standards are put into effect.
Wilfredo Lee The Associated Press

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 42 OF 69 STORIES

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August 22, 1997, Friday SUNRISE EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 1123 words

HEADLINE: Hudson Closes Plant USDA Also Asks Firm to Recall More Beef

BYLINE: JAKE THOMPSON, JOHN TAYLOR

SOURCE: WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

DATELINE: Washington

BODY:

Hudson Foods Inc. agreed Thursday to shut down its Columbus, Neb., hamburger processing plant and boost its nationwide recall to 25 million pounds of meat, the largest ever, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced.

In a press conference, Glickman said that Hudson Foods agreed to a USDA suggestion to halt production at the plant for an indefinite period. The shutdown would allow the company to correct a number of problems and to recall the additional meat.

"Today we presented Hudson with a specific proposal, which is in the best interest of public health, which they accepted," Glickman said.

Glickman said the plant can reopen once "they adopt far more stringent safety standards that we have specifically laid out for them."

The USDA's proposals, he said, are "non-negotiable," and "the plant will not reopen until they are all met."

In a statement, Hudson said the approximately 230 plant employees will continue to receive full pay "until a further decision concerning the plant is made."

Robert Udowitz, a Hudson spokesman in Washington, said the recall affects all ground beef produced at the Columbus plant from June 4 through Thursday.

All ground beef bearing the Columbus plant's identification number - 13569 - is being recalled, Hudson said.

"Today America has the safest food in the world," Glickman said. "These actions, while tough, are designed to keep it that way."

He said that after his department's investigators began examining the Columbus plant this week they found three key problems:

The plant carried over unused raw meat from one day to the next.

Omaha World-Herald, August 22, 1997

Company records were not clear enough to follow batches of meat precisely from when they entered the plant until they left.

The company did not test often enough for E. coli, considering the amount of ground beef the plant processed.

The USDA now says E. coli has sickened 20 people, all in Colorado, who ate Hudson beef products.

The USDA on Thursday added four more people to the list of those sickened. The people became ill early this month after eating Hudson meat processed July 14, said Thomas Billy, the department's Food Safety Inspection Service chief.

Billy said the tainted meat originated with one of Hudson's suppliers.

Seven suppliers are under scrutiny, he said, declining to name them or say whether the source of the contamination ever will be publicly released.

"This is a big step that we are taking today," Glickman said. "We continue to monitor the situation very closely, but all the evidence indicates that we have contained the outbreak. That is a remarkable achievement. Given the quantities of food, it certainly could have been far worse."

As he left the Columbus plant Thursday afternoon, Steve McAdams, operations manager of the Columbus plant, said: "It is a sad day for the whole beef industry. It is a blow to the whole beef industry, because this is a wholesome food that we all feed our families."

Glickman's action Thursday came after USDA inspectors and auditors went to the Columbus plant and to Hudson's headquarters in Rogers, Ark., on Monday to talk with employees, examine records and study plant practices.

Initially, Hudson recalled 20,000 pounds Aug. 12. The number doubled the next day, then rose to more than 1.2 million pounds last Friday.

That ground beef was processed on June 4, 5 and 9.

Glickman said Thursday that investigators, working through the night, determined by Thursday morning that they could not ensure that any of Hudson's meat was safe.

Billy said investigators found that the plant took crumbled hamburger patties and reprocessed them the next day. This raised questions about possible contamination on subsequent days, he said. Some of the plant's records also did not contain accurate numbers recording batches of meat coming into the plant and leaving it, he said.

Another problem, he said, was that although the company has run 57 tests in recent months for E. coli O157:H7, that was inadequate considering the output of the Columbus plant.

The plant produces about 400,000 pounds of frozen hamburger patties per eight-hour shift; the company has two shifts each day.

Omaha World-Herald, August 22, 1997

To reopen, the USDA said, the plant must stop its carryover practice, impose more regular bacterial tests and keep records so that it codes product more directly with the lots of raw meat being processed.

The plant has supplied frozen hamburger to Burger King, Boston Markets, Sam's Club stores and Safeway food stores.

The federal investigation is continuing, and it includes examining what federal meat inspectors assigned to the plant did to check meat and plant practices, Billy said.

Besides investigating Hudson, the USDA contacted the federal Centers for Disease Control to see whether other cases of E. coli illnesses were being reported elsewhere in the nation.

No pattern of illnesses have turned up in a nationwide review, Billy said.

The rapid response is part of a new network, Glickman said.

After a 1993 outbreak of E. coli illnesses in the Northwest when three children died and hundreds became ill, the USDA put in place an emergency response team with other federal agencies to investigate illnesses, their source and to work with state and health officials, Glickman said.

The department also has begun a new Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points program. It takes the department from a "poke and sniff" method of inspecting meat to a more science-based probe for pathogens, Glickman said.

But Glickman took issue with the fact he doesn't have legal authority to order a meat recall. He is able only to withdraw federal meat inspectors, effectively forcing a shutdown. He threatened to do that if necessary until his department is satisfied Hudson has improved its plant operations, but said the company has been cooperative.

Next month, when Congress returns, Glickman vowed to seek recall authority and civil penalties.

"I think most folks would be shocked to know that industry, and not federal food safety experts, ultimately make the decision as to whether or not food is recalled when public safety is compromised," he said. "There's really no question the American people want government doing everything it can to ensure that the food that is put on the table is safe."

At least one consumer group applauded the Agriculture Department's Thursday move.

"It is entirely appropriate," said Carole Tucker Foreman, coordinator of the Safe Food Coalition, a consulting group. "And I think it should make people everywhere more confident the meat they eat in the future is cleaner."

GRAPHIC: Color Mug/1 Dan Glickman

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 25, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 43 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The Omaha World-Herald Company
Omaha World-Herald

August 22, 1997, Friday SUNRISE EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 10

LENGTH: 1005 words

HEADLINE: Hudson Says Beef Plant Is High-Tech as It Gets A Look Inside Hudson
About the Plant

BYLINE: JOHN TAYLOR

SOURCE: WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

DATELINE: Columbus, Neb.

BODY:

"You can see the operation, how neat and clean it is," Norbert E. Woodhams, an executive of Hudson Foods Inc., said this week as he led visitors through the company's ground-beef processing plant.

"It's pretty straightforward," he said. "That's why we're very confident that the problem is an outside problem."

The problem referred to by Woodhams, president of the Hudson Specialty Foods Division, was the recall last week of more than 1.2 million pounds of ground beef produced in a three-day period at the plant. The U.S. Agriculture Department said the meat could be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7, a potentially deadly bacteria.

The recall was boosted Thursday to 25 million pounds, and Hudson voluntarily shut down production after an announcement by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman that USDA officials had found that the plant had a practice of using leftover raw meat from one day in the next day's production.

The investigation was prompted by reports that 16 people in Colorado who became ill from E. coli bacteria had eaten beef processed at the plant. The number was raised to 20 Thursday.

Glickman said Thursday that the outbreak had been "contained."

Woodhams said the company believes the meat was contaminated by meat from an outside supplier. He and other executives say the procedures used at the plant, as well as the company's food-handling safeguards, make the facility one of the best in the nation.

The 100,000-square-foot Hudson plant was built for \$ 32 million and opened in January 1995. The Arkansas company is primarily known for its poultry operations; the Columbus plant is the firm's only raw-beef processor.

Hudson officials said the Columbus site was chosen because 25 percent of all the U.S. beef supply is produced within 100 miles. James Hudson, company chairman, said that the plant has used beef from Australia in the past, but

Omaha World-Herald, August 22, 1997

company officials say no foreign meat has been used in the past 18 months.

Hudson won't identify its 15 suppliers either by name or by type - that is, whether all are packing plants or include some other sources.

The plant is about as high-tech as hamburger-making plants get, Hudson officials say. "Very few people have the equipment we have," Woodhams said.

Using a series of grinders, blenders and chillers, the work force of about 230 people can turn out 140 million pounds of frozen patties annually, along with an undetermined amount of ground beef in loose form.

The process begins with the delivery of vats filled with about 2,000 pounds of raw material - mainly beef trimmings and beef-fat trimmings - cooled to 35 degrees Fahrenheit at the start of the process.

Last week, Hudson began taking samples from the incoming trimmings and sending them to a laboratory in Rogers, Ark., where the company is based. The samples are tested for E. coli bacteria. Woodhams said the company also does its "normal sanitation swabs and bacteria checks."

The processing room is kept at 45 degrees. At the end of the grinding process, the meat is chilled to 26 degrees with the use of carbon-dioxide gas and sent through a nozzle with screen holes that remove small bone particles.

From there, the ground beef is placed into carts that are lifted and dumped into machines that form the beef patties. There are eight patty lines, all of which lead to conveyor belts that take the patties to a packaging area.

Woodhams said the plant has three shifts - two for production and one for cleanup.

"We shut the plant down every day at the same time (at 11:30 p.m.) for complete sanitation," he said. "Everything (is cleaned). The floor, ceiling, equipment, grinding equipment. All the equipment is physically disassembled every night, washed and sanitized."

At 5:30 a.m., the grinding process resumes.

The plant's processing and sanitation measures are monitored by two USDA inspectors, each assigned to a production shift.

A Look Inside Hudson

Thursday's voluntary suspension of operations at Hudson Foods' ground-beef processing plant in Columbus, Neb., stopped production at a plant its executives call one of the best in the country. Here's how the plant processes raw meat into ground beef.

1. Boxes of raw meat averaging 2,000 pounds are unloaded from suppliers' trucks. Contents are manually inspected, then fed into a rough grinder. This cuts the meat into 1/2-inch pieces.

2. Roughly ground beef then travels up a hopper and is deposited into a series of seven computerized storage blenders containing different mixtures of

Omaha World-Herald, August 22, 1997

lean beef and fat. The blenders will measure the correct ratio of beef trimmings and fat trimmings called for. Each blender can hold 6,000 pounds of meat.

3. The computer selects the blenders containing the ingredients needed for the final product and sends the ingredients to one of eight final mixers. The ingredients of two or three blenders may be used for the final mixture.

4. The computerized mixers finish the blending and check for fat content. Then a blast of CO2 gas is used to chill the meat, and it is ground more finely.

5. The ground beef is then pressed through a nozzle with screen holes 1/32 of an inch in diameter. Any pieces of bone larger than that are diverted through a hose into waste containers. The finished ground beef is then moved in carts to a final packing area, where patties are made, quick-frozen and packaged for shipment.

Source: Hudson Foods

E Coli Alert

Twenty people in Colorado have been diagnosed with E. coli food poisoning linked to the Hudson plant.

USDA Food Safety Hotline: 1-800-535-4555

University of Nebraska-Lincoln food-handling Web site:
<http://foodsci.unl.edu/foodsafety/index.html>

About the Plant

Built for \$ 32 million and opened in 1995.

A total patty capacity of 140 million pounds per year.

Employs about 230 people.

Hudson's only raw-beef processing plant.

Hudson's 1996 sales were \$ 1.4 billion. Beef contributed \$ 90.3 million to that.

GRAPHIC: B&W Photos/2 COVERED: Employees are required to wear hard hats, nets, long white coats, face masks, knee-high boots and sanitary gloves. ALMOST FINISHED: A worker fills a stainless steel container with processed hamburger from the final mixer. Illustration/1; Rich Janda/World-Herald/2 Dean Weinlaub/World-Herald/1

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 25, 1997

Copyright 1997 The Austin American-Statesman
Austin American-Statesman

August 21, 1997

SECTION: News; Pg. A5

LENGTH: 247 words

HEADLINE: Meat recalls to be posted on Web

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Agriculture Department said Wednesday it will change its policy of not alerting the public when tainted beef and poultry are recalled from restaurants.

Department officials said Wednesday they will begin immediately to post all recalls of contaminated beef and poultry on the World Wide Web (at www.usda.gov) and will send the report to about 200 private organizations on a weekly department mailing list.

But the Internet listings will be of little use to consumers because they will show only the name of the food supplier, not the restaurants where the recalled food was sent.

Thomas Billy, administrator of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service, said the issue of how best to include names of restaurants will be considered in a series of public hearings.

Billy said the review is being undertaken at the urging of Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and Undersecretary Catherine Woteki, who manages food-safety issues.

The change comes in response to news reports this week that revealed the department's policy of exempting restaurant food from public notifications of recalls.

Tom Amontree, department spokesman, predicted the policies will change.

Government records show that, without telling the public, the department recalled more than 1 million pounds of possibly contaminated meat and poultry that had been sent to restaurants and fast-food franchises during the past three years.

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 53 OF 69 STORIES

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August 21, 1997, Thursday METRO EDITION

SECTION: BUSINESS; Pg. 24

LENGTH: 325 words

HEADLINE: USDA to Begin Posting Recalls Of Beef, Poultry From Restaurants

SOURCE: COX NEWS SERVICE

DATELINE: Washington

BODY:

The U.S. Agriculture Department said Wednesday it will change its policy of not alerting the public when tainted beef and poultry are recalled from restaurants.

Department officials said Wednesday they will begin immediately posting all recalls of contaminated beef and poultry on the Internet and also will send the report to about 200 private organizations on a weekly department mailing list.

The Internet listings will be of little use to consumers because the lists will show only the name of the food supplier, not the restaurants where the recalled food was sent.

Thomas J. Billy, administrator of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service, said that the issue of how best to include names of restaurants will be considered in a series of public hearings.

No dates have been set for the public meetings, but Billy said they will be advertised to invite citizens' comment.

Billy said the review is being undertaken at the urging of Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and Undersecretary Dr. Catherine Woteki, who manages food safety issues. Noting that the department relies on the cooperation of the industry because the recall process is voluntary, Billy said the hearings will include industry representatives and government officials, as well as the public.

Tom Amontree, department spokesman, predicted that the policy will change.

Government records show that, without telling the public, the department recalled more than 1 million pounds of possibly contaminated meat and poultry that had been sent to restaurants and fast-food franchises over the last three years.

Although details of all recalls were not available, records show that in the latest case, involving 1,400 pounds of hamburger in Spokane, Wash., most of the contaminated food was eaten before it could be recalled. No illnesses were reported.

Omaha World-Herald, August 21, 1997

The Agriculture Department's Web address is: www.usda.gov

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 25, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 56 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 The San Diego Union-Tribune
The San Diego Union-Tribune

August 20, 1997, Wednesday

SECTION: NEWS; Ed. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8; Pg. A-6

LENGTH: 439 words

HEADLINE: Agriculture chief hails new food safety steps

SOURCE: REUTERS

BODY:

New U.S. food safety measures including state-of-the-art computer surveillance for food-borne disease kept the recent E. coli outbreak from "exploding" throughout the nation, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said yesterday.

Consumer groups acknowledge that the government has made strides in safeguarding the food supply but said the latest crisis highlighted loopholes that still exist in the system.

The Agriculture Department will meet today with food service experts to discuss the safe cooking of hamburgers. Food safety experts say the dangerous bacteria are killed only by thoroughly cooking beef at 160 degrees.

On Friday, the department said that an Arkansas meat processor, Hudson Foods Inc., would recall a record 1.2 million pounds of hamburger because of possible contamination with a deadly strain of the E. coli bacteria. Health officials said the bacteria made 16 people sick in Colorado last month.

The last previous U.S. outbreak of the virulent E. coli O157:H7 linked to beef was in 1992-93, when 700 people became sick and four children died in the West after eating undercooked, contaminated hamburgers.

"Just look at the difference between this situation and what you had four years ago," Glickman told reporters after a speech. "We have to date kept the problem from exploding to a really serious problem that affected a lot of people.

"It is a test of the food safety monitoring and reporting system, and it's working quite well."

The department is implementing a revolutionary overhaul of federal meat inspection, replacing the poke-and-sniff method of certifying that meat and poultry are safe to eat with scientific testing for sickness-causing bacteria. The testing is known as "hazard analysis and critical control point systems.

Glickman also credited new safe-handling labels on meat and poultry and the cutting-edge computer system, Foodborne Disease Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet), which helps public health officials track food-borne disease.

At sunrise Monday, a team of inspectors from the Agriculture Department descended on the Hudson Foods meat-packing plant in Nebraska at the heart of

The San Diego Union-Tribune, August 20, 1997

the recall to try to determine the source of the E. coli contamination.

Investigators are also expected to visit the slaughter plants that supplied Hudson Foods with the beef. Animal feces that spill onto meat when the intestines are removed after slaughter are a major source of E. coli contamination.

"I think we should be able to say something here in two to three weeks' time," said Thomas Billy, head of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 21, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 57 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

August 19, 1997, Tuesday

SECTION: BUSINESS; Pg. 1D

LENGTH: 680 words

HEADLINE: Inspectors comb plant; Hudson outlook bright

BYLINE: RUSSELL RAY, ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

BODY:

As agriculture officials Monday inspected the Hudson Foods Inc. plant that shipped more than a million pounds of potentially tainted hamburger, analysts predicted that the much-publicized recall would hardly affect the bottom line of the Rogers-based meat-processing company.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Friday recalled 1.2 million pounds of ground-beef patties produced by the company, fearing the supply may be contaminated with the potentially deadly E. coli 0157:H7 bacteria. The recall was issued after about 20 people in Colorado became ill after eating Hudson beef patties in July.

Monday, a so-called SWAT team of inspectors met several Hudson executives at the Columbus, Neb., processing plant that produced the meat to begin determining the source and extent of the contamination. The Agriculture Department didn't issue any new information on the investigation.

However, Thomas J. Billy, administrator for the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, told The Associated Press that the source of the contamination had not yet been identified but most likely came from a source outside the plant, which processes up to 3 million pounds of beef each week, mainly for Burger King and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. of Bentonville.

The Agriculture Department is checking some of Hudson's suppliers, Billy said, adding that if one of them is the source, the bacteria could have gone to other meat processors.

"If we are able to identify a single source as a possibility, we will be reviewing that plant's records to see if there's any indication that problems occurred," Billy said.

The company's stock has dropped 12 percent since Aug. 12, when it was selling at \$ 16.25. It closed Monday at \$ 14.88, unchanged.

The recall grew from 20,000 pounds Aug. 12 to 1.2 million by Friday and included hamburger produced at the Nebraska processing plant June 4, June 5 and June 9. The suspect meat was distributed to restaurants and grocery stores nationwide, according to the Agriculture Department.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, August 19, 1997

"I've sent the SWAT team out to this particular plant because I want to send signal throughout the industry that we will not tolerate practices which are incompatible with public health," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said Sunday on CNN's Late Edition.

Leonard G. Teitelbaum, who follows Hudson Foods for Merrill Lynch, said the bad publicity should have minimal financial impact. Hamburger sales make up a small percentage of the company's total sales, and food-service companies which buy Hudson products are satisfied with them.

"Hudson Foods is primarily a poultry producer, which they are extremely efficient at," Teitelbaum said, adding that hamburger is a "very small" part of its processing operation. "They're in the hamburger business because their reputation as a processor was so good that one of the major food-service chains asked them to produce products for them. It was their reputation as a good quality producer that got them in this business to begin with."

Of the \$ 1.7 billion in projected 1997 sales, hamburger sales should make up about \$ 110 million of that figure, Teitelbaum estimates.

"Hamburger is not critical to the earnings outlook for Hudson Foods," he said. "If the price of corn comes down a nickel a bushel, that's going to do a lot more to Hudson Foods' profitability than their entire hamburger operation."

Meanwhile, Hudson has started conducting "extensive" tests on beef delivered to the Columbus plant, which work to detect E. coli and other harmful microbes. The additional testing should not delay shipment from the plant, according to Hudson.

E. coli 0157:H7 can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and dehydration. The elderly, children and those with weak immune systems are most susceptible to the harmful bacteria.

John Marcy, an extension food scientist at the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science at the University of Arkansas, said the best way to eliminate E. coli is to thoroughly cook meat.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 58 OF 69 STORIES

Copyright 1997 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

August 18, 1997, Monday

SECTION: UNK; Pg. 1B

LENGTH: 754 words

HEADLINE: Mystery of E. coli persists

BYLINE: Doug Peters, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

BODY:

Six days and 1.2 million pounds of hamburger later, neither Hudson Foods Inc. nor government investigators have discovered the source of E. coli bacteria responsible for one of the largest food recalls of the decade.

James T. Hudson, chairman of the Rogers-based company, said 57 E. coli tests on both incoming and outgoing meat products at the company's Columbus, Neb., processing plant "have not picked up anything."

"We're still baffled as to where it came from," he said during a telephone conference with reporters.

But if the source of the contamination remains a mystery, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said, it won't be for lack of looking.

Glickman on Sunday told CNN he had sent a "SWAT team" to investigate last week's recalls "because I want to send a signal throughout the industry that we will not tolerate practices which are incompatible with public health."

Still, Glickman acknowledged that the contamination was not necessarily a result of improper handling at the plant. The bacteria could have been present when the meat was delivered from one of Hudson Foods' suppliers, he said.

Glickman said he also was concerned by the company's inability to immediately determine the amount of meat that was potentially contaminated.

Hudson said he expected 10 to 12 inspectors to arrive today.

"We welcome them," he said, "because we're not afraid of what they'll find."

Hudson Foods announced a voluntary recall of 20,000 pounds of beef last Tuesday. The next day, the company added another 20,000 pounds. Friday, the Department of Agriculture extended the recall to include everything produced by the company's Columbus plant on June 4, June 5 and June 9 -- a total of 1.2 million pounds of beef.

The recalls began after hamburger patties produced by the plant in early June were blamed for the illnesses of several people in Colorado.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, August 18, 1997

The bacteria known as E. coli 0157:H7 is a potentially deadly microbe that can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and dehydration. It is especially dangerous to children and elderly people and to those with weakened immune systems.

Hudson said he was not upset with breadth of the recall and stressed that Friday's recall resulted from an agreement between the company and Department of Agriculture.

"When it comes to the public safety, we are not going to take any chances," he said.

Hudson began the conference call with a brief statement aimed at dispelling recent criticism from USDA officials and public advocacy groups on the handling of the recalls.

Initial estimates of the amount of potentially dangerous meat were far lower than the amount eventually recalled, because the company had very little time to prepare a recall announcement, he said.

"The amount of volume was not important to the control of health," Hudson said. "The thing that was important was to get the code dates and the product description out to the public as quickly as possible."

Company employees did not know exactly how much meat would be affected by the recall when the initial announcement was made, Hudson said. As the scope of the problem became clearer, he said, the recall was expanded. That took three days.

The USDA is reviewing records at the Columbus plant to find out why it took so long for the company to provide a full production report.

The recalled products are 3-pound and 15-pound boxes of uncooked, frozen hamburger patties marked with the codes 156A7, 155B7, 155A7, 160A7 or 160B7.

Although all of the recalled beef has been taken off store shelves and out of circulation, Hudson said, some people may have frozen the patties for use later. The USDA recommends that consumers check the labels on all Hudson Foods beef patties purchased since early June.

Hudson Foods is the country's third-largest publicly held poultry producer. The company began processing beef in February 1995 when it opened the Columbus processing plant. It now supplies ground beef and frozen hamburger patties to Safeway, Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores, as well as Burger King and Boston Market restaurants. Sales of beef products, including frozen hamburger patties, amounted to \$ 90.3 million, 6.6 percent of total sales.

In 1995, Hudson Foods had the nation's largest-ever meat recall when it recalled 3.9 million pounds of ground turkey that contained small bone fragments.

Information for this article was contributed by The Associated Press.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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Omaha World-Herald

August 18, 1997, Monday SUNRISE EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 985 words

HEADLINE: Firm Says Supplier Likely Taint Source USDA Team Probing Beef Problem
Hudson Foods Reacts

BYLINE: JOHN TAYLOR

SOURCE: WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

BODY:

Hudson Foods Inc. believes the E. coli bacteria responsible for a recall of more than 1.2 million pounds of ground beef from its Columbus, Neb., plant may have originated with a supplier, the chairman of the company said Sunday.

"We're conducting an investigation, and we're not real sure yet that we've identified the particular supplier, but we think we're very close," James T. Hudson said in a telephone press conference from Hudson's headquarters in Rogers, Ark.

It was Hudson's first detailed public comment on the story that broke Tuesday with an announcement that his company was recalling 20,000 pounds of frozen beef patties suspected of being contaminated by E. coli O157:H7, a potentially deadly bacteria that can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and dehydration.

That was followed on Wednesday by the recall of another 20,000 pounds of ground beef and on Friday by the announcement that the recall covers more than 1.2 million pounds.

Hudson said Sunday that "at this point in time" he does not believe any additional meat will be recalled.

The USDA said it is trying to find out why there was a delay in fully reporting the extent of the problem.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said Sunday that he has sent a "SWAT team" of food inspectors to the Columbus plant to find the source of E. coli bacteria.

"We don't know the source of the contamination, whether it was through improper handling at the plant, or it might have been because of the raw product that was coming in from the suppliers," Glickman said Sunday on CNN's "Late Edition."

Glickman said he wants "to send a signal throughout the industry that we'll not tolerate practices which are incompatible with public safety."

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Hudson said he welcomed the 10 to 12 additional inspectors "because we're not afraid of what they will find."

Describing the sequence of events in the first days of the recall, Hudson said that when his company learned that its beef was suspected of making people sick, the company felt it was more important to publicize the correct packaging information rather than calculate the amount involved.

"The thing that was important was to get the code dates and product description out to the public as quickly as possible," he said.

Hudson said that with the rush to get the information out, "there was not as much attention paid to the tonnage as perhaps should have been."

In a prepared statement Sunday, Hudson said the company is dismayed over the contamination, but he denied that the company purposely delayed fully reporting the problem.

"We wish to state emphatically that Hudson Foods has moved with all dispatch as information became available, and has in no way tried to hide any information from the USDA or the public," said Hudson, founder of the 25-year-old company.

He said the recall was initially confined to a portion of the ground beef processed at the Columbus plant on June 4, 5 and 9 and was later expanded to include everything produced on those days.

The USDA and the company, "acting out of an abundance of caution," expanded the volume over four days.

The Hudson recall began after a number of illnesses, between 15 and 20, were reported in Colorado by people who ate hamburgers produced at the Columbus plant.

"We have at this time instituted a full and aggressive investigation at our Columbus, Nebraska, plant to determine the source of the contamination," Hudson said. "The truth is that we don't know at this particular point the source. It may have come in from outside purchases. It may have originated at the plant, but we don't think so."

While Hudson also said that the beef "may have been contaminated after it left" the Columbus plant, he added that "we're not saying it did. We're accepting responsibility that there was a genetic link back to our plant, and that it very likely did come from our plant."

Hudson declined to identify any of the plant's major suppliers. He acknowledged that the 2-year-old plant has processed beef from outside the United States - Australia, for one country - but said that foreign beef was not being processed during early June.

Tim Hackler, a spokesman for Hudson, said later that no foreign beef has been used at the plant in the last year.

Hudson said he was "not at liberty" to disclose all the customers to whom the beef was sold, "but there is none in circulation, there is none on the shelves. The only place it could possibly be today would be either in

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somebody's freezer, or it would have been locked up by the customers who got
.."

Among the customers of the Columbus plant identified earlier are Burger King, Boston Market and Wal-Mart's supercenters and Sam's Clubs.

The Hudson company conducts regular tests for E. coli O157:H7, the chairman said. "I counted up that we've done 57 of those tests in the last three or four months, and, of course, we have not picked up anything. So we're still baffled as to where it came from."

Hudson's testing, he said, is done on beef before and after it is processed.

Hudson said the plant's suppliers also "are supposed to be testing" for E. coli O157:H7.

"I'm not real sure I know exactly their test procedures," he said. "That's something we're going to find out, though. What we're going to have to do is go into these places and satisfy ourselves that their testing procedures are adequate."

Hudson Foods Reacts

James T. Hudson, chairman of Hudson Foods Inc., discussed the meat recall at length for the first time Sunday.

He believes a supplier may have been the source of E. coli bacteria.

He does not expect more meat will be recalled.

He said the company is dismayed over the contamination and did not try to hide information.

He said a "full and aggressive investigation" has been instituted.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

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August 18, 1997, Monday SUNRISE EDITION

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Pg. 14

LENGTH: 553 words

HEADLINE: Several Lines of Defense Exist Against Contamination in Food

BODY:

The recall of 1.2 million pounds of hamburger patties produced at Columbus, Neb., has caused legitimate concern about the safety of the nation's food supply. Nonetheless, if people pay attention to what safety experts are saying about the E. coli bacteria strain that led to the recall, long-term damage to the beef industry should be minimal.

Federal authorities ordered the recall to protect consumers from a particularly harmful variety of the E coli. Hudson Foods Co., the owner of the Columbus plant, had initially recalled 20,000 pounds of the patties and then another 20,000 pounds. The company acted after 20 people in Colorado became ill with E. coli symptoms after eating the meat.

Americans have come to expect the cleanest, safest food supply the world has ever known. People are troubled when they are told that something in their food could make them sick. But as the stories about the Hudson recall have demonstrated, there is cause for reassurance. Strenuous efforts are being made to make the clean, safe food supply even cleaner and safer.

At the Columbus plant, Hudson has tested frequently to keep the product free of E. coli. Several large restaurant chains that are major servers of hamburgers revealed that they also test for E. coli. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, whose department inspects meat at processing plants, said Sunday that the USDA will step up its inspections at Columbus and refuse to tolerate practices anywhere that endanger the public.

Of course meat should be processed carefully enough to avoid contamination with the E. coli, which is sometimes present in fecal matter. Testing by the government, the processor and the restaurants should minimize any contamination problem by stopping a contaminated shipment before it gets to the public.

But even if a tainted load slipped through, the public has another line of defense against getting sick: Proper preparation of the meat.

One of the most significant facts about the recall is that most of the meat in question may no longer exist. The patties were produced in June; most are believed to have been cooked and eaten without incident. That's because E. coli strain is most likely to cause harm when the meat is served rare. It dies when the meat is well cooked. Most restaurant chains that bought the patties and fed them to the public said they typically cooked their hamburgers thoroughly enough to kill harmful bacteria.

The government has been trying to persuade the public to avoid undercooked hamburgers ever since a 1993 outbreak of E. coli resulted in three deaths and

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hundreds of illnesses, mostly in the state of Washington. People who don't follow that advice are taking an undue risk. They also take a risk if they handle raw meat and then touch other food without first washing their hands.

Hudson's problem is regrettable. The Arkansas-based company has made many efforts at its Columbus plant, only 21/2 years old, to implement modern food-handling methods and enforce stringent efforts to turn out a safe product. The E. coli illnesses in Colorado and the resulting federal recall demonstrate that even greater efforts are necessary - not only by the industry but also by people who buy and cook hamburger at home.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

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Omaha World-Herald

August 18, 1997, Monday METRO EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 1020 words

HEADLINE: Hudson Resumes Shipping A Columbus, Neb., plant tied to E. coli returns to beef processing Monday

BYLINE: JOHN TAYLOR

SOURCE: WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

BODY:

Workers resumed processing and shipping ground beef from Hudson Foods Inc.'s Columbus, Neb., plant Monday as a number of federal inspectors tried to find the source of the E. coli bacteria suspected of contaminating 1.2 million pounds of beef.

The precise number of inspectors from the U.S. Agriculture Department couldn't be determined, although a company official said up to 12 were expected.

Meanwhile, James T. Hudson, chairman of the company, said it was likely that the contamination came from meat delivered to the plant.

Plastic-wrapped boxes of beef trimmings from outside suppliers are delivered to the plant on pallets, said Becky Triplett, a corporate legal assistant at Hudson's. Each pallet carries 22,000 pounds of trimmings.

Part of the trimmings is processed into frozen ground beef patties and part is processed according to customers' specifications, she said Monday. In Hudson's recall last week, some of the frozen patties went to retail stores and wholesale clubs and other ground beef went to fast-food restaurants.

In a telephone press conference Sunday from Hudson's headquarters in Rogers, Ark., Chairman Hudson said, "We're conducting an investigation, and we're not real sure yet that we've identified the particular supplier, but we think we're very close."

It was Hudson's first detailed public comment on the story that broke Tuesday with an announcement that his company was recalling 20,000 pounds of frozen beef patties suspected of being contaminated by E. coli O157:H7, a potentially deadly bacteria that can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and dehydration.

That announcement was followed on Wednesday by the recall of another 20,000 pounds of ground beef and on Friday by the announcement that the recall covers more than 1.2 million pounds.

Hudson said Sunday that "at this point in time" he does not believe any additional meat will be recalled.

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The USDA said it was trying to find out why there was a delay in fully reporting the extent of the problem.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said Sunday that he had sent a "SWAT team" of food inspectors to the Columbus plant to find the source of E. coli bacteria.

"We don't know the source of the contamination, whether it was through improper handling at the plant, or it might have been because of the raw product that was coming in from the suppliers," Glickman said Sunday on CNN's "Late Edition."

Glickman said he wants "to send a signal throughout the industry that we will not tolerate practices which are incompatible with public safety."

Hudson said he welcomed the 10 to 12 additional inspectors "because we're not afraid of what they will find."

Describing the sequence of events in the first days of the recall, Hudson said that when his company learned that its beef was suspected of making people sick, the company felt it was more important to publicize the correct packaging information rather than calculate the amount involved.

"The thing that was important was to get the code dates and product description out to the public as quickly as possible," he said.

Hudson said that with the rush to get the information out, "there was not as much attention paid to the tonnage as perhaps should have been."

In a prepared statement Sunday, Hudson said the company was dismayed over the contamination, but he denied that the company purposely delayed fully reporting the problem.

"We wish to state emphatically that Hudson Foods has moved with all dispatch as information became available and has in no way tried to hide any information from the USDA or the public," said Hudson, founder of the 25-year-old company.

He said the recall was initially confined to a portion of the ground beef processed at the Columbus plant on June 4, 5 and 9 and was later expanded to include everything produced on those days.

The USDA and the company, "acting out of an abundance of caution," expanded the volume over four days.

The Hudson recall began after a number of illnesses, between 15 and 20, were reported in Colorado by people who ate hamburgers produced at the Columbus plant.

"We have at this time instituted a full and aggressive investigation at our Columbus, Nebraska, plant to determine the source of the contamination," Hudson said. "The truth is that we don't know at this particular point the source. It may have come in from outside purchases. It may have originated at the plant, but we don't think so."

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While Hudson also said that the beef "may have been contaminated after it left" the Columbus plant, he added that "we're not saying it did. We're accepting responsibility that there was a genetic link back to our plant, and that it very likely did come from our plant."

Hudson declined to identify any of the plant's major suppliers. He acknowledged that the 2-year-old plant has processed beef from outside the United States - Australia, for one country - but said that foreign beef was not being processed during early June.

Tim Hackler, a spokesman for Hudson, said later that no foreign beef has been used at the plant in the last year. Ms. Triplett said Monday that Hudson has not purchased meat from outside the U.S. in the last 18 months.

Hudson said he was "not at liberty" to disclose all the customers to whom the beef was sold, "but there is none in circulation, there is none on the shelves. The only place it could possibly be today would be either in somebody's freezer, or it would have been locked up by the customers who got it."

Among the customers of the Columbus plant identified earlier are Burger King, Boston Market and Wal-Mart's supercenters and Sam's Clubs.

The Hudson company conducts regular tests for E. coli O157:H7, the chairman said. "I counted up that we've done 57 of those tests in the last three or four months, and, of course, we have not picked up anything. So we're still baffled as to where it came from."

Hudson's testing, he said, is done on beef before and after it is processed.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

LEVEL 1 - 62 OF 69 STORIES

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August 17, 1997, Sunday SUNRISE EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1a

LENGTH: 1136 words

HEADLINE: Inspections At Beef Plant To Increase The USDA chief cites Hudson Foods' history in boosting scrutiny of the Columbus facility

BYLINE: TODD COOPER

SOURCE: WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

BODY:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will increase inspections of the Hudson Foods plant in Columbus, Neb., to determine whether more beef is contaminated with E. coli, a USDA spokeswoman said Saturday.

More than 1.2 million pounds of ground beef from the plant is now under recall, the largest such recall of bacterially contaminated meat or poultry in U.S. history.

A team of five inspectors - including a deputy inspector general out of the department's Washington office - will review plant records and operations beginning Monday, said Jacque Knight, spokeswoman for the USDA.

The plant, closed for the weekend, will be allowed to continue production during the inspections, she said.

Among other concerns, Ms. Knight said, officials want to determine why Hudson didn't inform the Agriculture Department immediately of the extent of the potential problem.

Hudson voluntarily recalled 20,000 pounds of meat Tuesday, then another 20,000 pounds Wednesday. Friday the USDA extended the recall to a total of 1.2 million pounds as an added precaution.

"We don't know that all of the 1.2 million pounds is contaminated," Ms. Knight said. "We just know that some of it is. That's why we're recalling those products. We need to test as much as we can."

She said the department sent a compliance officer to the plant Friday. The team of five inspectors that arrives Monday is to include an epidemiologist and the USDA inspector, based in Schuyler, Neb., who routinely checks the plant.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman Saturday said concern about the company's history was one of the reasons his department was escalating the investigation.

Glickman said it was not yet clear whether the beef contamination was a rare event at the plant or was part of a "serious systemic breach of compliance" with food safety rules. But he said he was bothered by the company's initial underestimation of how much beef was involved and its status as the national

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record holder for meat recalls.

"Obviously, it causes me great concern that the same company is responsible for the two largest call backs," Glickman said.

In 1995, about 3 million pounds of Hudson Foods Delightful Farms Finely Ground Turkey were recalled because of contamination with tiny shards of bone, said USDA spokesman Tom Amontree.

In that case, as in the current burger case, estimates of how much meat was tainted rose over a number of days. The turkey recall originally was for about a million pounds, until audits revealed that more meat and additional package sizes were involved.

The current burger scare comes at a time when Hudson is facing \$ 332,500 in federal fines for worker safety violations at its Noel, Mo., poultry processing plant, according to a July 22 U.S. Newswire report. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited the company for alleged "willful, serious and repeat" violations that included blocked emergency exits and improper labeling of hazardous materials, the report said.

Meanwhile, investigators in Johnson County, Iowa, are checking to see whether an outbreak of E. coli infections there since late July has any connection to the beef from the Columbus plant.

The outbreak, whose source remains unknown, has sickened 21 people, 17 of them children under age 11, said Angela Poppe, a nurse with the Johnson County department of Public Health. The victims are members of nine families who socialize together, she said, and all have recovered.

About a third of the people infected with E. coli get it from contaminated food. Another third contract pick up the bacteria from swimming in water that is not chlorinated. The rest contract it from another person.

The suspect hamburger patties were made on June 4, June 5 and June 9 at the Columbus plant and were sold under the Hudson brand name, the USDA said. Hudson Foods Co. is based in Rogers, Ark.

The burgers come in 48-ounce packages with the code 156A7 on the bottom, in 3-pound packages with the code 156B7, and in 15-pound boxes with the codes 155A7, 155B7, 160A7 and 160B7, the Agriculture Department said.

Since E. coli outbreaks have been linked to hamburger that is undercooked, many food experts recommend against eating a hamburger that is pink inside.

Tom Amontree, the USDA's director of communications, said the burgers from the Columbus plant have sickened 16 people in Colorado, but he said no one had died or become seriously ill.

E. coli can cause abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea and dehydration. Children, the elderly and people with damaged immune systems are most in danger. E. coli bacteria come from animal fecal matter and generally find their way into meat at processing plants.

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Health specialists in the past have estimated that scattered instances of E. coli kill a few hundred Americans each year and make thousands more ill.

The agriculture secretary on Friday promised an investigation of the Columbus plant thorough enough that "no unsafe product is being allowed to go into commerce."

Cathie Woteki, the department's undersecretary for food safety, said the USDA "will pursue the appropriate corrective action" against Hudson. She would not elaborate, and Amontree said it was too early to speculate about punishment. But he said, "We don't send in the inspector general on a whim."

The suspect hamburger was distributed nationwide, in retail grocery stores and wholesale stores. Agriculture Department officials said much of it has probably been eaten by now. Consumers who still have Hudson burgers in their freezers should return them to the stores, the department said.

The Clinton administration has made food safety one of its priorities.

In July 1996, President Clinton announced new rules for the meat-processing industry. Designed to bring more scientific testing into the inspection process, the rules amounted to the most sweeping changes in industry practices since the Meat Inspection Act of 1907.

The president also has announced a food-safety program for his 1998 budget, proposing that the government spend \$ 43 million to increase the quantity and quality of seafood inspections and widen inspections of fruit and vegetable juices.

Meanwhile, the Food and Drug Administration has been stretched thin. It faces the huge new task of regulating nicotine in tobacco, as part of the proposed legal settlement with the tobacco industry, and its unannounced inspections of food and drug manufacturers have declined steadily in the past decade, from 22,189 in 1986 to 15,104 last year.

The number of inspectors at the Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service declined from about 12,000 in 1978 to 7,500 as of Friday.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 22, 1997

2/9/3 (Item 1 from file: 486)
DIALOG(R)File 486: Press-Telegram
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09234017 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
HUDSON FOODS PLANT CLOSES AS HAMBURGER RECALL WIDENS
SAFETY: 25 MILLION POUNDS OF PATTIES CALLED BACK; MEAT HANDLING,
SLAUGHTERHOUSE CITED.

Calvin Woodward; Associated Press
Press-Telegram, AM ED, P A6
Friday, August 22, 1997

JOURNAL CODE: LB LANGUAGE: ENGLISH RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT
SECTION HEADING: MAIN NEWS
Word Count: 413

TEXT:

WASHINGTON - A Nebraska plant that produced possibly hazardous hamburger patties has been closed and is recalling an estimated 25 million pounds of the product, a huge leap in the possible scope of the contamination.

E. coli bacteria contamination originated outside the plant, at the slaughterhouse, but the massive recall is needed because of problems with meat handling, record keeping and safety testing at the operation, Agriculture Department officials said Thursday.

The Columbus plant will not open until the company has adopted "far more stringent safety standards that we have specifically laid out for them based on what we have found in our investigation," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said.

The announcement means the recall is growing some 20-fold from Aug. 15 to cover all patties ever made by the plant that are still believed to be in the marketplace.

Officials said it was the department's largest recall.

But it is only a small fraction of the 8 billion pounds of ground beef of all types produced in the country each year. And the Columbus plant accounts for less than 7 percent of Hudson Foods' sales, the company said.

Company chairman James T. Hudson said the company ordered the recall "out of an abundance of caution and to restore the public confidence."

Glickman said fewer than 20 people are known to have gotten sick from the tainted meat.

"We continue to monitor the situation very closely, but all the evidence

and return them to the place of purchase. All Hudson products are labeled with an "establishment number," which is 13569.

The company's burgers are carried by such national chains as Burger King, Wal-Mart, Boston Market, Sam's Club and Safeway.

Burger King announced it would immediately pull all Hudson products from its restaurants. About 25 percent of Burger King outlets carry Hudson beef products, and some of those restaurants may experience temporary shortages of burgers, the company said in a statement.

Boston Market ordered Hudson patties pulled from all of its 1,200 stores. "The patties will be out of our stores within the next 15 minutes," said Jeff Beckman, Boston Market's public-relations director, just an hour after the 2:30 news conference.

Beckman said 40 percent of its stores used Hudson beef from the Columbus, Neb., plant to make meatloaf. For a time, he said, meatloaf will not be available at the affected eateries.

Beckman said no Boston Market restaurants in Texas had meat from the Nebraska plant.

Officials at the Defense Commissary Agency, which supplies the 300 military commissaries around the world, issued a notice ordering that the "offending Hudson beef products" be removed from sale.

A Safeway spokeswoman in Oakland, Calif., said only one division in the country - the Denver stores - did business with Hudson Foods and that the division removed all of the company's beef from its stores Aug. 12, the day the first recall was announced.

Although the patties had been carried by Sam's Club, a division of Wal-Mart, a spokeswoman for the retailing giant said all Hudson ground beef was pulled off shelves at the warehouse stores last week.

Glickman said the department was moved to recommend closure of Hudson's Columbus, Neb., plant and a total recall after inspectors learned that the company had a practice of saving leftover raw meat not used in the burger-making operation on

one day and adding it to batches of raw meat used to make burgers the next day. That method makes it increasingly difficult with each day to keep track of whether any leftovers from a contaminated batch have made their way into subsequent batches.

The problem was exacerbated by inadequate bookkeeping methods for tracking the fate of various lots of beef, said Thomas Billy, administrator of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service, which is directing the food-safety arm of the Hudson investigation. Billy said the agency also was "concerned" that the company's testing for bacterial contamination has been inadequate.

A separate investigation for possible criminal activity is continuing, said USDA Inspector General Roger Viadero. That probe was initiated after a USDA audit last week determined that the company's initial estimate of the amount of meat that may have been contaminated in June was short by more than a million pounds.

Billy said the department was now fairly certain that the contamination, caused by a potentially deadly bacterium called E. coli O157:H7, originated in raw meat provided to Hudson from one of seven suppliers. When the culprit supplier is identified definitively, he said, investigators will follow up to see if that company also shipped contaminated products to other processing facilities.

That investigation could lead to additional recalls, officials said.

Billy said the beef plant would not reopen until the company presents the USDA with an acceptable plan for testing its raw meat and revamps its record-keeping and product-coding system in a way that will allow better tracking of product lots.

Consumers wanting more information about the recall were urged to call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 800-535-4555. Woteki said the hot line took a record 6,000 calls last weekend after the agency announced its expanded recall.

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COMPANY NAMES (Dialog Generated): Agriculture Department ; Boston Market ;

at this point indicates that we have contained the outbreak," he said.

Recalls were announced last week, first with 20,000 pounds of meat, then another 20,000, and Aug. 15 it became 1.2 million pounds.

The initial Hudson recall began after health officials in Colorado traced the illnesses of more than a dozen people to hamburgers in early June.

The Agriculture Department has evidence that the contamination occurred not in the plant but at one or more of the slaughterhouses that supply it, said Tom Billy, administrator of department's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which investigated the E. coli outbreak associated with the patties in Colorado, said Thursday that 15 people became ill between June 14 and July 14.

The CDC said the Hudson patties may have been distributed to all 48 contiguous states.

The plant's major customers include Safeway, Wal-Mart, Burger King, Sam's Club and Boston Market, officials said.

All those said they were immediately ceasing sales of beef from Hudson Foods or already had done so.

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COMPANY NAMES (Dialog Generated): Agriculture Department ; Boston Market ;
Burger King ; Disease Control ; Hudson Foods ; Prevention ; Safeway ; Sam
's Club ; Wal Mart

DESCRIPTORS: FOOD SAFETY REGULATION

2/9/4 (Item 1 from file: 488)
DIALOG(R)File 488:Duluth News Tribune
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09234021 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

BEEF PULLED OFF MARKET

PACKER ORDERS LARGEST MEAT RECALL EVER

Heather Dewar and David Goldstein/News-Tribune Washington Bureau

Duluth News-Tribune, FINAL ED, P 01A

Friday, August 22, 1997

JOURNAL CODE: NT LANGUAGE: ENGLISH RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT

SECTION HEADING: FRONT

Word Count: 1,195

TEXT:

WASHINGTON - The largest meat recall in U.S. history began Thursday as the beef company linked to the latest outbreak of E. coli-tainted hamburgers agreed to pull off the market and destroy 25 million pounds of ground beef.

Under intense pressure from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Arkansas-based Hudson Foods Co. also agreed Thursday to shut down its plant in Columbus, Neb., and not reopen it until the company erases all the government's doubts that its processes are safe.

The ground beef being recalled was processed in June and some may already have been eaten. But because it's in the form of frozen patties, USDA officials believe much of it may still be stored by wholesalers, distributors, grocers and restaurants around the country.

Local Cub Foods, Super One Foods and Jubilee Foods stores do not carry Hudson meat.

A smaller amount of Hudson's beef was recalled last week.

About 20 people in Colorado got sick from the potentially deadly E. coli bacteria starting in June. No one has been reported sick since mid-July.

The bacteria cause severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration.

Three children died in a larger outbreak in the Pacific Northwest in 1993.

Federal food safety experts were still trying to find the cause of the latest outbreak, which was traced to boxes of four-ounce beef patties produces at Hudson's Nebraska plant. Officials now believe the beef was contaminated with fecal matter at one of Hudson's supplier slaughterhouses,

and the contamination was spread during the grinding at the hamburger plant.

One of the difficulties, the USDA said, is that Hudson used meat left over from one day's grinding in the next day's work.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced the plant's shutdown, stressing that the company's action was voluntary, but came under threat of government retaliation. Glickman said USDA officials presented Hudson with a list of "non-negotiable" requirements.

"I am well aware that I do not have the authority to order these recommendations," Glickman said. "But I do have the authority to withdraw inspectors. If necessary, I will do that to halt operations until I'm comfortable telling the American people that this food is safe."

Without the federal inspectors' labels, the meat could not be sold in U.S. stores.

Thursday's recall highlighted weaknesses in the nation's meat safety system, which has not been significantly modernized since the 1930s. Though government inspectors look at meat as it passes through slaughterhouses and processing plants, there is no inspection for invisible and potentially dangerous bacteria, such as *E. coli*.

The quickest test for *E. coli* takes at least three days to complete, said microbiologist Hans Blaschek of the University of Illinois. By that time, potentially contaminated meat is far away, perhaps on consumers' dinner tables. And once an outbreak is discovered, the government cannot order a recall of tainted meat.

The USDA is phasing in a series of common-sense changes in its inspection system that should reduce contamination, but won't make it any easier to see it when it does occur. In the meantime, the government recommends that consumers cook meat until it registers 160 degrees. At that temperature, all the dangerous microbes are killed.

Blaschek said the USDA used to tell consumers to cook meat until it was brown in the middle, but recently the agency discovered that some disease microorganisms can still be present even if the meat looks thoroughly cooked. Checking each burger with a thermometer is the only way to be sure it's safe, the agency said.

"That's not something anybody I know is going to do," Blaschek said. He suggested consumers just use common sense and not worry too much, since *E.*

coli contamination remains relatively rare.

Also Thursday, officials said processed chicken delivered to schools in Wisconsin and around the nation as part of the federal school lunch program may contain dioxin and should be destroyed.

The chicken, in the form of frozen nuggets and patties, was sent to schools in 33 states and Puerto Rico over the past year. Authorities believe much of the chicken has already been consumed.

The USDA, which supplied the chicken, said the recall is precautionary.

"The level of dioxin does not represent any kind of health risk or immediate threat," said Mary Ann Keeffe, the USDA's deputy undersecretary for food, nutrition and consumer services.

Wisconsin officials were notified of the recall last week. The state Department of Public Instruction sent letters to all 865 public school districts and private schools that take part in the lunch program.

The USDA is not recalling chicken available in stores that came from the batches, Keeffe said.

Federal investigators tracked the contamination to tiny bits of clay produced by a Mississippi company and mixed with chicken feed to prevent clumping.

Of 80 chickens tested, two had unacceptably high levels of dioxin -- three to four parts per trillion, Keeffe said. Federal health officials consider one part per trillion acceptable.

Dioxin can cause cancer if consumed at high levels over long periods of time.

The USDA estimates that E. coli and other food-borne bacteria cause an estimated 4,000 deaths and 5 million illnesses per year.

The E. coli bacteria are commonly found in human intestines.

Scientists discovered its toxic form in 1982, and the microorganism gained notoriety in a 1993 outbreak that began at a Seattle Jack-in-the-Box, sickening several hundred people and killing three children.

The bacteria produce a toxin that damages the colon, causing a painful bloody diarrhea. In severe cases, it can shut down the kidneys and destroy

blood cells. It is rarely fatal, but children and the elderly are at greatest risk.

Consumer groups like Safe Tables Our Priority (STOP), which was formed by the victims of the 1993 outbreak, say many of these illnesses could be prevented if the government conducted more stringent inspections and tests, and if the USDA had the authority to shut down problem plants and recall suspect meat.

INFOBOX: How to avoid E. coli infection

Ways to cut down on E. coli infection in and outside the home:

%BC% Cooking hamburgers
%EC%

*Cook ground beef patties until juices run clear; patty center should be greyish brown, not pink

*Never put cooked burgers back on plate that held raw patties; cooked burgers could be recontaminated

%BC% In a restaurant

%EC%

*If you get a burger that's pink inside, send it back for more cooking

%BC% Other places

%EC%

*To avoid contact with infected human feces, wash hands with soap and water at day care centers, nursing homes or after diapering child

%BC% In the kitchen

%EC%

*Wash hands, utensils after handling raw ground beef; E. coli can live in kitchen towels, sponges, cutting board

*Use special cutting board for raw meat

%BC% Why hamburger is riskiest

%EC%

*With steaks and roasts, bacteria are on meat surface and easily killed in

*With hamburger, bacteria are sometimes inside patty and harder to kill.

Source: Agriculture Department

CAPTIONS: PHOTO Associated Press ; Workers at the Hudson Foods plant in Columbus, Neb., process ground beef Monday. The meat processing plant in Columbus that is suspected in an outbreak of E. coli contamination is shutting down until more stringent safety standards are in effect.

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SPECIAL FEATURES: PHOTO

COMPANY NAMES (Dialog Generated): Department of Public Instruction ; Hudson Foods Co ; Jubilee Foods ; Local Cub Foods ; Super One Foods ; U S Department of Agriculture ; University of Illinois ; USDA

2/9/5 (Item 1 from file: 536)
DIALOG(R)File 536:(Gary) Post Tribune
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09235008 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
NO SURE-FIRE METHOD TO MARKET SAFE MEAT
Heather Dewar, Knight-Ridder Washington Bureau
GARY POST-TRIBUNE, ALL ED, P A3
Saturday, August 23, 1997
JOURNAL CODE: GP LANGUAGE: ENGLISH RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT
SECTION HEADING: NATIONAL
Word Count: 516

TEXT:

WASHINGTON - In spite of meat recalls, scientific advances and stepped up plant inspections, the federal government cannot ensure Americans' food is free of dangerous bacteria. And experts say it probably will never be able to.

Scientists cannot keep up with the disease-causing toxin that killed three Oregon toddlers in 1993 and sickened at least 15 Coloradans this summer. The toxin is carried by the common E. coli bacterium, which seems to be developing new forms faster than scientists can develop tests to trace them or treatments to stop them.

The toxin surfaced in ground meat again this summer and is at least 10 times more potent than other common food-borne diseases. A tiny amount can cause a nasty bout of intestinal illness - as well as kidney failure, brain damage and even death in about one out of every 4,000 people stricken.

So the bottom line for shoppers remains the same as it was in Roman times: Caveat emptor. Buyer, beware.

"People are getting a false sense of security," said epidemiologist Paul Mead of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "They believe the government will take care of them and secure a perfectly safe food supply.

"In fact, the government can't do that. Consumers have to play an active role in protecting themselves."

Under pressure from Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, one meat-packing plant took steps this week to recall suspect frozen hamburger patties and overhaul its procedures.

But scientists at the CDC say none of this will get at the source of the

problem: meat already tainted before it reached the plant with a strain of E. coli, named 0157:H7.

And that strain is only one of E. coli's potentially dangerous forms.

Scientists did not know that in 1982, when they began work on tests that can quickly identify E. coli 0157:H7 in people and in food. About a year ago, they succeeded. New tests, not yet widely used in industry, can spot the strain in about eight hours, said researcher David Atcheson of Tufts University-New England Medical Center.

The scientists were fast, but the disease was faster, Atcheson said. He and others have identified about 60 more varieties of E. coli the new tests won't find, and they too carry the lethal agent, known as Shiga toxin.

Named nearly 100 years ago by a Japanese physician, Shiga toxin mysteriously attacks the cell walls of the intestine and, in severe cases, the kidney and brain. It's the cause of several different intestinal diseases, including dysentery epidemics in Africa and Asia. In the past two years, it has caused outbreaks in Australia, Japan, Great Britain and the United States, using a variety of E. coli strains as its host.

"Just a tiny sample is enough to make you sick," Atcheson said. "So, can you test ground beef to a point where you can be entirely sure it was safe? In my opinion, no - not now, and probably not any time in the foreseeable future. Safe handling and cooking, that's where the buck stops."

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COMPANY NAMES (Dialog Generated): CDC ; Disease Control ; Prevention ;
Tufts University New England Medical Center

2/9/7 (Item 1 from file: 539)
DIALOG(R)File 539:Macon Telegraph
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09234014 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
MEAT RECALL NOW MASSIVE; PLANT CLOSING

Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Macon Telegraph, HOME ED, P 1

Friday, August 22, 1997

JOURNAL CODE: MT LANGUAGE: ENGLISH RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT

SECTION HEADING: A

Word Count: 893

TEXT:

WASHINGTON - The largest meat recall in U.S. history began Thursday as the beef company linked to the latest outbreak of E. coli-tainted hamburgers agreed to pull off the market and destroy 25 million pounds of ground beef.

Under intense pressure from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Hudson Foods Co. also agreed Thursday to shut down its plant in Columbus, Neb., and not reopen it until the company erases all the government's doubts that its processes are safe.

The ground beef being recalled was processed in June and some may already have been eaten. But because it's in the form of frozen patties, USDA officials believe much of it may still be stored by wholesalers, distributors, grocers and restaurants around the country.

A smaller amount of Hudson's beef was recalled last week.

About 20 people in Colorado got sick from the potentially deadly E. coli bacteria starting in June. No one has been reported sick since mid-July.

The bacteria cause severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration.

Three children died in a larger outbreak in the Pacific Northwest in 1993.

Federal food-safety experts were still trying to find the cause of the latest outbreak, which was traced to boxes of 4-ounce beef patties produced at Hudson's Nebraska plant. Officials now believe the beef was contaminated with fecal matter at one of Hudson's supplier slaughterhouses, and the contamination was spread during the grinding at the hamburger plant.

One of the difficulties, the USDA said, is that Hudson used meat left over from one day's grinding in the next day's work.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced the plant's shutdown, stressing that the company's action was voluntary, but came under threat of government retaliation. Glickman said USDA officials presented Hudson with a list of "nonnegotiable" requirements.

"I am well aware that I do not have the authority to order these recommendations," Glickman said. "But I do have the authority to withdraw inspectors. If necessary, I will do that to halt operations until I'm comfortable telling the American people that this food is safe."

Without the federal inspectors' labels, the meat could not be sold in U.S. stores.

Thursday's recall highlighted weaknesses in the nation's meat safety system, which has not been significantly modernized since the 1930s. Though government inspectors look at meat as it passes through slaughterhouses and processing plants, there is no inspection for invisible and potentially dangerous bacteria, such as E. coli.

The quickest test for E. coli takes at least three days to complete, said microbiologist Hans Blaschek of the University of Illinois. By that time, potentially contaminated meat is far away, perhaps on consumers' dinner tables. And once an outbreak is discovered, the government cannot order a recall of tainted meat.

The USDA is phasing in a series of common-sense changes in its inspection system that should reduce contamination, but won't make it any easier to see it when it does occur. In the meantime, the government recommends that consumers cook meat until it registers 160 degrees. At that temperature, all the dangerous microbes are killed.

Blaschek said the USDA used to tell consumers to cook meat until it was brown in the middle, but recently the agency discovered that some disease microorganisms can still be present even if the meat looks thoroughly cooked. Checking each burger with a thermometer is the only way to be sure it's safe, the agency said.

"That's not something anybody I know is going to do," Blaschek said. He suggested consumers just use common sense and not worry too much, since E. coli contamination remains relatively rare.

The USDA estimates that E. coli and other food-borne bacteria cause an estimated 4,000 deaths and 5 million illnesses per year.

The E. coli bacteria are commonly found in human intestines.

Scientists discovered its toxic form in 1982, and the microorganism gained notoriety in a 1993 outbreak that began at a Seattle Jack-in-the-Box, sickening several hundred people and killing three children.

The bacteria produce a toxin that damages the colon, causing a painful bloody diarrhea. In severe cases, it can shut down the kidneys and destroy blood cells. It is rarely fatal, but children and the elderly are at greatest risk.

Consumer groups like Safe Tables Our Priority (STOP), which was formed by the victims of the 1993 outbreak, say many of these illnesses could be prevented if the government conducted more stringent inspections and tests, and if the USDA had the authority to shut down problem plants and recall suspect meat.

STOP and other consumer groups said they support Glickman's actions. Dale Moore, a spokesman for the National Cattleman's Association, said his organization does too.

"The safety of the beef supply is pretty important to our industry," he said.

Glickman told reporters Thursday he will go back to Congress seeking new authority to regulate the industry. And Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., chairman of the House subcommittee that oversees food safety, said he will hold hearings in the fall on the need for new regulations.

Microbiologist Blaschek said he found a box of the suspect Hudson burgers in his freezer and returned them to the grocery store for a refund.

"Statistically, the odds are against you getting exposed to the microorganism from hamburgers, but you don't want to play the odds with people's children," he said. "That's why I took them back."

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COMPANY NAMES (Dialog Generated): Hudson Foods Co ; National Cattleman 's Association ; U S Department of Agriculture ; University of Illinois ; USDA

2/9/9 (Item 1 from file: 577)
DIALOG(R)File 577:Roanoke Times
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09236024 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
EXPERTS: MEAT TESTS ARE NEVER FOOLPROOF'
WITH HUDSON CASE, POLL FINDS AMERICANS LESS LIKELY TO BUY BEEF
CURT ANDERSON ASSOCIATED PRESS
Roanoke Times, METRO ED, P A1
Sunday, August 24, 1997
JOURNAL CODE: RO LANGUAGE: ENGLISH RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT
SECTION HEADING: NATL/INTL
Word Count: 1,006

TEXT:

WASHINGTON - Burger King announced Saturday it will no longer buy ground beef from Hudson's Columbus, Neb., plant.

No matter how sophisticated government testing of meat and poultry becomes, the sheer volume produced in America may make it impossible to detect all dangerous bacteria in food, inspectors say.

"There is probably no way to absolutely foolproof this process," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said last week.

For example, the Hudson Foods Co. ground beef plant in Nebraska, shut down last week during a federal probe into E. coli contamination, had been producing up to 3million pounds of frozen hamburger every week.

That's 12 million quarter-pound patties.

The Hudson situation has shaken some Americans' confidence, a new Newsweek poll found, with 54 percent saying they are less likely to buy burgers at fast-food restaurants and 41 percent saying they are less likely to buy hamburger meat at grocery stores.

Feeling customers' concerns, Burger King announced Saturday that it no longer would buy ground beef from Hudson's Columbus, Neb., plant. A statement by Hudson called it "a serious disappointment" because Burger King had been a major purchaser.

Unlike those in most states, Virginia's Burger Kings had not used meat from Hudson.

Agriculture Department inspectors go to slaughterhouses that supply

Hudson and the Hudson plant itself. But it is not practical to test all that meat for E. coli, salmonella or other bacteria that can make people sick, officials say.

And health risks in the meat industry can start well before the cattle reach slaughterhouses.

Agriculture experts told U.S. News & World Report that farmers often add waste substances to livestock and poultry feed. Chicken manure, which is cheaper than alfalfa, is increasingly used as feed by cattle farmers despite possible health risks to consumers, says the magazine reaching newsstands Monday.

"Feeding manure that has not been properly processed is supercharging the cattle feces with pathogens likely to cause disease in consumers," Dr. Neal Barnard, head of the Washington-based health lobby, Physicians for Responsible Medicine, told the magazine.

This can make the Agriculture Department meat inspectors' job even harder.

Tight budgets at the agency just exacerbate the problem. The number of inspectors at the agency's Food Safety and Inspection Service fell from about 12,000 in 1978 to 7,500 today - to cover the 6,500 private meat and poultry plants around the country.

According to the Newsweek poll, 62 percent said the government should spend more money on food inspection to ensure that U.S.-produced food is safe, with an even division over whether the government already is doing a good job.

Pathogens such as E. coli remain a health problem in America. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that up to 9,800 E. coli cases and 120,000 salmonella cases a year occur when people don't sufficiently cook ground beef containing the bacteria. Cooking at high enough temperatures will kill the germs.

Together, the microbes cost upwards of \$500million a year in medical bills and lost productivity, according to a USDA estimate.

The first meat inspection laws date back to 1906, in the wake of books such as Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" that exposed the once-filthy conditions in the packing industry.

Under those laws, which remain essentially unchanged for 90 years, USDA inspectors worked inside private meat and poultry plants nationwide. They

examined sample carcasses and products by sight, smell and touch, trying to determine if the product was safe and wholesome.

But the federal rules never required scientific tests for bacteria such as E. coli. Some larger companies did it anyway, while smaller ones tested only if customers had specific requirements.

Now, new inspection rules are being phased in that for the first time will require some scientific testing for bacteria at all meat and poultry processing plants by the year 2000. In the case of E. coli, all plants regardless of size had to begin their own testing last Jan.27.

Even that will involve only samples taken once or twice a day from plants that can move tens of thousands of pounds of meat a day.

Still, Glickman said the focus will be on critical points in plants where contamination is likely. In the case of E. coli, animal fecal matter is the most frequent source, so tests will be done at points along the chain where its presence is prevalent, such as after cattle are slaughtered, when the meat is cut into large pieces for various uses.

"Hopefully you'll be able to discover problems much earlier in the process," Glickman said.

Such scientific testing generally involves taking a sample from meat, putting it in a lab dish and testing it chemically to see if harmful bacteria are present.

At Hudson, company officials agreed to recall all the beef processed at the plant since the date of contamination - up to 25 million pounds - and to shut down the plant until stronger safety recommendations were met. There was no indication when the plant might reopen.

Company founder James T. Hudson said the Nebraska plant had done 57 E. coli tests of its own since the beginning of the year. All were negative.

The source of contamination for Hudson beef patties processed during three days in early June has not been found. But government and company officials say it likely came from a slaughterhouse supplier outside the plant.

Thus, Hudson said the company will now do E. coli testing on the meat arriving from slaughterhouses.

"We're going to start inspecting every lot that comes in, rather than

just depending on the supplier," he said. "We're going to visit with some of our suppliers and make sure we're comfortable with their testing."

The new federal rules also require companies to keep much better records of their testing and monitoring, and to enable officials to trace the source of any contamination that does occur.

But in Hudson's case, the medium-sized Nebraska plant won't have to comply fully with the rules until January 1999. Federal inspectors said this week they were investigating whether Hudson's record-keeping had been lacking.

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COMPANY NAMES (Dialog Generated): Agriculture Department ; Burger King ; Disease Control ; Hudson Foods Co ; Neb ; Newsweek ; Prevention ; U S News & World Report

2/9/10 (Item 1 from file: 582)
DIALOG(R)File 582:Augusta (GA) Chronicle
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09234024 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

USDA

CLOSES

PLANT

DEPARTMENT SHUTS DOWN NEBRASKA BEEF MAKER THAT POSSIBLY MADE
CONTAMINATED

HAMBURGER PATTIES

Associated Press

Augusta Chronicle, ALL ED, P A12

Friday, August 22, 1997

JOURNAL CODE: AG LANGUAGE: ENGLISH RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT

SECTION HEADING: NEWS

Word Count: 481

TEXT:

WASHINGTON - The Agriculture Department announced Thursday that a Nebraska plant that produced possibly contaminated hamburger patties has been shut down in the wake of an outbreak of illness in Colorado.

Hudson Foods Co. also was expanding its previous recall to include all hamburger meat that originated at the plant, an estimated 25 million pounds of beef.

USDA officials said the contamination originated outside the plant, at the slaughterhouse.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said the company agreed to the measures for its Columbus, Neb., plant. The plant will not reopen until the company has adopted "far more stringent safety standards that we have specifically laid out for them based on what we have found in our investigation," he said.

"We continue to monitor the situation very closely, but all the evidence at this point indicates that we have contained the outbreak," Mr. Glickman said.

Hudson Foods said in a prepared statement that it ordered the recall "out of an abundance of caution and to restore the public confidence." It said that raw ground beef products at the plant are the only products involved in the recall.

Last week, the company began the recall, first with 20,000 pounds of meat and then another 20,000, and on Friday it became 1.2 million pounds of hamburger from the Columbus plant.

E. coli bacteria contamination is suspected. The initial Hudson recall began after health officials in Colorado traced the illnesses of more than a dozen people to hamburger patties they ate in early June.

The USDA has evidence that the contamination occurred not in the plant but at one or more of the slaughterhouses that supply it, said Tom Billy, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Officials are looking at the seven slaughterhouses that were known to have supplied the plant on June 5, he said.

They are "now satisfied no indication of contamination occurred in the plant itself," Mr. Billy said.

Mr. Glickman said the main reason the recall is being expanded was that USDA officials Thursday morning discovered problems in the plant's handling and recording procedures. Specifically, he said, investigators discovered the plant had a practice of using leftover raw meat from one day in the next day's production.

E. coli is a potentially deadly bacteria that often gets into food through contact with fecal matter. It causes severe diarrhea, cramps and dehydration and was blamed for three deaths and hundreds of illnesses in Washington state in 1993, mainly because of undercooked burgers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which investigated the E. coli outbreak associated with the patties in Colorado, said Thursday that 15 people became ill between June 14 and July 14, five of whom were hospitalized. Eleven said they had eaten frozen patties, and eight specifically remembered eating Hudson Foods patties, the CDC said.

The CDC said the Hudson patties may have been distributed to all 48 contiguous states.

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COMPANY NAMES (Dialog Generated): Agriculture Department ; Disease Control ; Hudson Foods Co ; Neb ; Prevention