

Taken from a CNN new article

Scary Beef!

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/18/business/18recall.html?ex=1361077200&en=530661fc75779626&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

It was prompted by a Department of Agriculture investigation that found that Westland/Hallmark did not always alert federal veterinarians when its cows became unable to walk after passing inspection, as required.

“Because the cattle did not receive complete and proper inspection, F.S.I.S. has determined them to be unfit for human food and the company is conducting a recall,” Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer said in a statement. F.S.I.S. is the Agriculture Department’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Technically, the Department of Agriculture does not have the authority to recall meat. However, it can withdraw its inspectors from a plant, putting pressure on a company to issue a recall.

The company is recalling all its raw and frozen beef products since Feb. 1, 2006. Of the 143 million pounds that were recalled, 37 million went to make hamburgers, chili and tacos for school lunches and other federal nutrition programs, officials said.

Cows that cannot walk are banned for use in the food supply because they pose an added risk of mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a fatal disease that eats away at the brain. There have been three confirmed cases of infected cattle in this country since 2003.

The announcement on Sunday was classified as a Class II recall, indicating that the chances of health hazards were remote. Other large recalls involving E. coli have been Class I recalls, indicating that eating the product may cause serious health problems or even death.

Officials at Westland/Hallmark meat could not be located on Sunday for comment.

Some critics pointed out that the recall exposed gaps in the nation’s system for food safety.

“The recall is obviously the big news,” said Wayne Pacelle, president and chief executive of the Humane Society. “The longer-term problem is the inadequacies of the inspection system. How can so many downers have been mistreated day after day within a U.S.D.A. oversight system that was present at the plant?”

“We need more boots on the ground at the plants,” he said.

The undercover video, shown on television and on YouTube and other Web sites, has caused an uproar since its release.

The Department of Agriculture started an inquiry and suspended the company as a supplier to federal nutrition programs. Steve Mendell, president of Westland/Hallmark, said afterward that he was “shocked and horrified” by the videos and voluntarily suspended operations pending the outcome of the federal inquiry.

(This is just another example of the inadequacies of the inspection system that this editor has been trying to expose for years and which caused me to be fired!!)