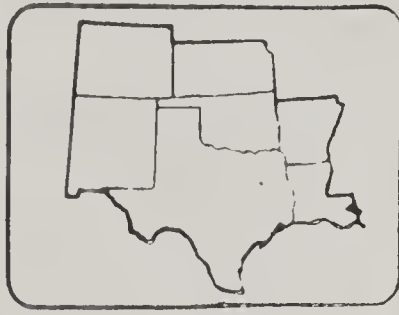


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FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SERVICE

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USDA Withdraws Meat Grading, Inspection Services From Two Calif. Firms

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has withdrawn meat grading, inspection, and acceptance services for 1 year from two California meatpacking plants charged with bribing federal meat graders.

Carol Tucker Foreman, assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer service, said this action was ordered by a USDA law judge as the result of separate complaints issued against the C&M Meat Packing Corporation and the National Meat Packers, Inc., of National City, Calif., and their corporate president, Thomas Monleon.

Charges were brought against the firms by USDA's Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS) Aug. 24, 1978, and by FSQS's two predecessor agencies, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service on Oct. 20, 1976, and the Agricultural Marketing Service on Sept. 13, 1976.

Foreman said that C&M and National are related firms whose former general manager, Charles D. Olsen, was convicted on Jan. 20, 1976, of bribing meat graders. Olsen was sentenced to 2 years' probation and fined \$10,000. Subsequently, he was discharged by the firms.

More recently, the firms and Monleon were charged with illegally furnishing free meals and liquor to meat graders.

Without admitting or denying the charges, the firms and their president consented to an order withdrawing meat inspection services for 6 weeks and meat grading and acceptance services for 7 weeks. The remainder of the 1-year period will be suspended as long as Olsen is not rehired, said Foreman.

Federal meat inspection is required under the Federal Meat Inspection Act for all meat and meat products sold in interstate commerce. Meat grading and meat acceptance services are voluntary USDA programs provided for a fee to meat buyers and suppliers.

