

Steps are taken to prevent adulterated meat import

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block has announced a series of "tough, new" steps designed to prevent mislabeled, uninspected or otherwise adulterated meat from coming into the United States.

The action follows confirmation by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists over the weekend that

some cartons of beef imported since January from a single Australian plant included horse meat.

Block said USDA will take the following steps to protect American consumers and business interests:

—Australian meat labeled as boneless beef presently in the United States is being tested to

assure its species. The meat will also be tested to determine whether the adulteration is confined to the Profreeze plant, Richmond, Victoria-Establishment No. 140-C.

—Boneless meat leaving Australia must be tested for species identification by the Australian government; and be maintained under government

security until it reaches the United States. U.S. authorities will then assume responsibility.

—Boneless meat now enroute from Australia to the United States will be held at the point of entry and tested for species determination by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service before it is allowed to enter the United States.

—Countries shipping boneless meat to the United States will be notified that they must initiate a species determination program. All fresh and frozen boneless meat entering the United States, regardless of country of origin, will be spot-checked for species by U.S. authorities.

—USDA will initiate a review of compliance activities within major exporting countries to assure controls are in place during all stages of distribution to maintain the integrity of meat exports designed for the United States.

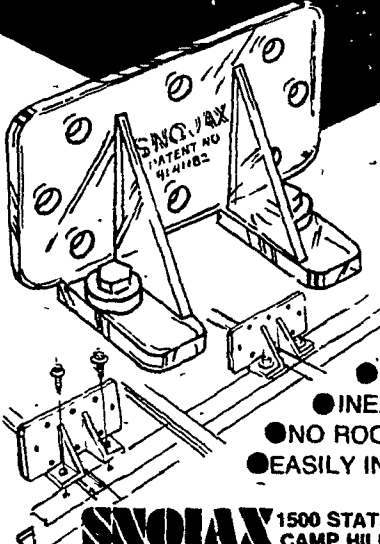
"These steps are necessary because mislabeled and adulterated imports apparently have been coming into the United States for several months," Block said. USDA and Australian

authorities are continuing to investigate the problem.

Since January 1, about 815,000 pounds of boneless beef have been imported into the United States from the Profreeze facility, Block said. Of that, USDA has thus far located and embargoed 270,000 pounds of boxed unprocessed boneless beef and 275,000 pounds of patties and ground meat. All of this meat is unacceptable as human food, Block said.

"The discovery last week by Australian authorities that some product on the docks there destined for the United States was actually kangaroo meat, as well as horse meat, may have been illicitly imported in the past," Block said. "Embargoed meat in the United States will be further tested for kangaroo after we get testing material from the Australian government."

Federal authorities first found in early August that horse meat was being imported in boxes labeled beef when a USDA processing plant inspector in San Diego, Calif., became suspicious of meat that did not appear to be beef.

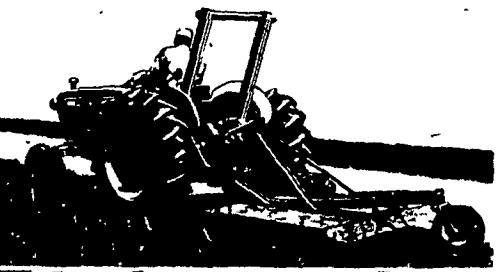


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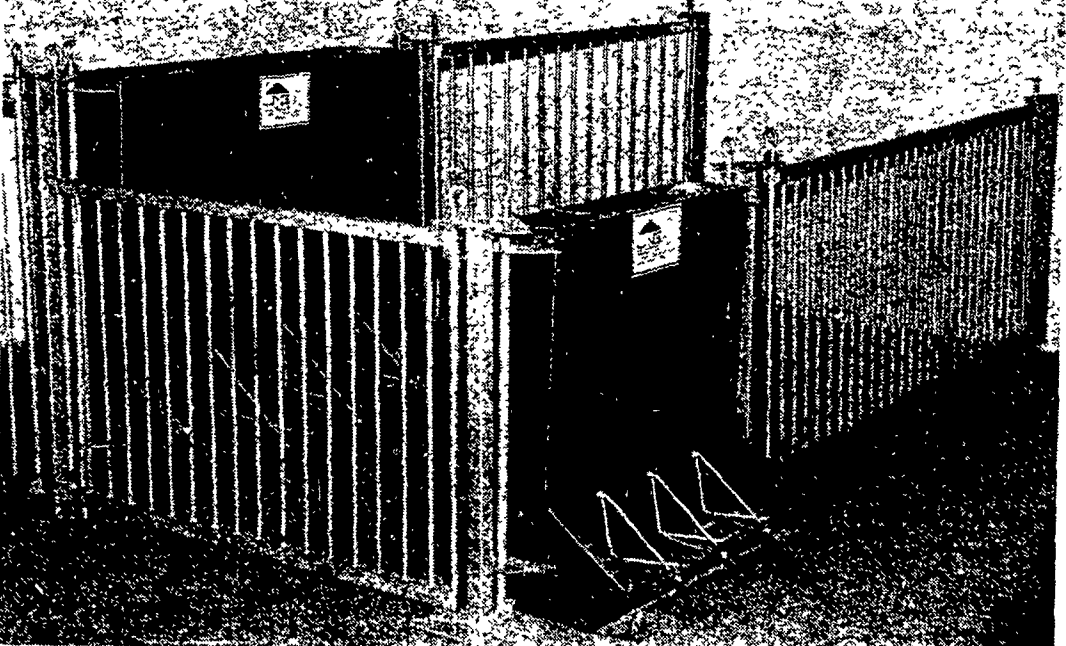
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