Civ. Action No. 06-930 (RMC)

EXHIBIT 51
Meat Plant Violated Cruelty Laws

By Orlan Love, The Gazette, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Mar. 11--An internal U.S. Department of Agriculture report concludes that Postville meatpacker Agriprocessors violated animal cruelty laws while government inspectors played computer games and ate meat improperly provided them by plant managers.

The 15-page report by the USDA's inspector general concluded that "employees of Agriprocessors had engaged in acts of inhumane slaughter" and that federal inspectors "observed the acts of inhumane slaughter and did nothing to stop the practice."

The report also found that "inspectors accepted meat products from Agriprocessors employees" and "engaged in other acts of misconduct."

The USDA imposed minor sanctions on three of the plant's 10 inspectors ... whose names were all blanked out in the report ... but the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Iowa declined to press criminal charges.

Information included in the report did not "present a prosecutable case," Assistant U.S.

Attorney Robert Teig said Friday.

After reviewing video footage taken in 2004 by an undercover investigator for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the USDA has concluded that Agriprocessors repeatedly violated provisions of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act.

The report said the video showed cattle having their throats cut by a rabbi, followed by the removal of the trachea from the animal's throat by a plant employee.

After being dumped from the kill box to the floor, the animals exhibited movement ranging from standing upright and attempting to stand to thrashing about and moving their heads, the report said.

The removal of the windpipe from a conscious animal violates federal slaughter rules prohibiting dismemberment of animals still sensitive to pain.

The report contains summaries of interviews with inspectors and supervisors then or formerly at the plant.

It describes several incidents in which plant employees gave inspectors packages of meat, some of which was consumed at the plant.

The acceptance of such gifts is described as misconduct, but investigators concluded it did not constitute bribery.
The report also described an inspector sleeping as contaminated chickens came down the line and a supervisor playing games on a government computer.

The Agriculture Department suspended one of its inspectors for 14 days and gave letters of reprimand to two others, according to Steve Cohen, a spokesman for the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

PETA Director Bruce Freidrich said the animal-rights organization was pressing for USDA to fire "all the inspectors who accepted gifts and did nothing about these egregious abuses of the animals they are charged to protect."

Agriprocessors spokesman Mike Thomas said the company had not seen the USDA report until Thursday, when it received a copy from the New York Times.

Thomas noted, however, that a USDA warning notice in September advised Agriprocessors that no legal action would be taken.

In light of Agriprocessors' modification of practices, "we have determined that legal action will not be instituted at this time," said Scott Safian, the USDA's director of evaluation and enforcement.

The modified practices, adopted at the USDA's direction, included ending the practice of removing tracheas after the rabbis' initial kill cuts and incorporating use of a stun gun in situations when the animal was not rendered immediately senseless by the kill cut.

Stunned animals do not meet kosher guidelines but much of Agriprocessors' output is for non-kosher markets, Thomas said.

Thomas also said humane slaughter audits are conducted at least four times a year at the plant.

Agriprocessors, with about 800 workers, is Postville's largest employer and the nation's largest producer of meat certified glatt kosher, the highest standard for cleanliness under kosher law.

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