

was produced and handled as well as to whether any abuse occurred in the processing plant. Consequently, the USDA standards for dry milk provide specific bacterial limitations. About 75,000 samples of dry milk were tested last year under our voluntary inspection program in certifying 800 million pounds of product, or 49 percent of the national production.

Incidence of Salmonella in dry eggs is a particularly difficult problem because this airborne micro-organism is so easily transported by the large volume of warm air required to dry the pasteurized, liquid eggs. Therefore, all dry eggs produced under the USDA continuous inspection program are required to be tested for Salmonella bacteria prior to release for consumption. Last year, about 18,000 tests were performed under our voluntary inspection program in certifying 45 million pounds of product, or 72 percent of the national production.

Dried milk and dried eggs are the only products under USDA mandatory or voluntary inspection standards for which bacterial estimates for each lot of product are required as part of our inspection process. For meat and poultry products (as well as other foods under voluntary inspection), many surveillance bacteriological tests are made. The primary function of these tests is to try to correlate good sanitary practice with microbial levels for specific products. Abnormal results can then be used as a warning device for intensified inplant sanitary inspections to guard against some hidden or overlooked source of contamination. Our inspection services performed more than 20,000 such tests during this past year.

And this, Mr. Chairman, ends my formal statement.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Your full statement will be printed at this point in the record.

(The statement referred to follows:)

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GEORGE L. MEHREN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am happy to respond to your request for information about practices of the Department of Agriculture governing sale in commercial channels of food products which fail to meet Departmental purchase specifications.

We have a two-fold interest in your inquiry. First, we carry major responsibility in the field of consumer protection through enforcement of the meat and poultry inspection programs along with many other service and regulatory functions. Secondly, we are one of the major Federal agencies buying food. With our relatively tight specifications for the school lunch and needy family distribution programs, many rejections of commodities are made.

The Department provided or helped to provide food to almost 27 million people during fiscal year 1967. Some 22 million school children, 1.3 million people in institutions and 3.3 million needy persons received almost 1.5 billion pounds of foods costing about \$247 million. In conducting these programs, we made a continuous—and we believe a successful—effort to insure that only high quality, wholesome foods reach the people who participate. At the same time, we took definitive steps to insure that foods purchased by the Department do not re-enter commercial channels in a manner that might be deceptive or in any other way harmful for ultimate consumer use.

Generally speaking, most rejections by the Department of proffered products result from the product not meeting the relatively high specification standards set for our own food programs. Normally, rejection for these programs does not render the product unwholesome or in any other way unfit for human consumption. U.S. Department of Agriculture specifications for the food products it purchases are generally considerably higher than minimum commercial standards. This difference in specifications is entirely reasonable in the light of