

FARMER'S PRODUCE CO. CASE

This truckload of frozen turkeys was rejected at destination because the temperature ranged from 15° to 28° F. The contract called for 15° F. or below. The product was otherwise in good condition and was therefore released to the vendor for refreezing and sale into commercial channels. School lunch labels were removed and the proper labels applied for domestic sale.

GOLDKIST CO. CASE

This truckload of frozen chickens was rejected at destination and returned to vendor due to excessive temperature ranges above the contract specification of 15° F. The recorded range was 20° to 30° F. The product was returned to the plant where it was reinspected, repackaged, and refrozen. Goldkist has since sold 31,500 pounds of this lot to commercial buyers. A USDA poultry on last Thursday, March 28, examined the remaining 4,500 pounds in storage in Boaz, Ala. He found that the product is in good condition.

SWIFT & CO. CASE

This truckload of frozen chicken was rejected at destination and returned to the vendor due to a temperature range reaching 30° F. whereas the contract specification called for 15° F. The product was returned to the plant where it was reinspected, repackaged, and refrozen. Swift has since sold 9,000 pounds of this lot to commercial buyers. A USDA poultry inspector on last Thursday, March 28, examined the remaining 27,000 pounds in storage in Los Angeles. He reports that the product is in good condition.

BACTERIOLOGICAL TESTING

Selective use of bacteriological tests, if properly interpreted, is an important adjunct to a sound and effective food standards and inspection program. Microbial standards taken by themselves alone would not, however, be an adequate substitute for plant inspection in determining if sanitation is good or bad. High aerobic plate counts may not reflect contamination but, instead, may be caused by time-temperature abuse in processing. Conversely, a log-count food does not necessarily reflect good sanitation or wholesomeness because bacteria can easily be cooked to destroy evidence of unsanitary conditions during processing.

Good examples of the significance of microbial standards are provided by dry milk and dry eggs. The level of micro-organisms in dry milk provides a guide to the conditions under which the fluid milk 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.

Dry milk and dry 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 in-plant 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.

In conclusion, I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the question submitted to us. My colleagues and I shall be glad to answer any other questions you may have.