



NEWS RELEASE

John Muir Chapter, 222 So Hamilton St #1, Madison WI 53703
(TEL) 608-256-0565; (FAX) 608-256-4562 www.sierraclub.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 13, 2002 rev.

CONTACT:
Caryl Terrell, Sierra Club 608-256-0565
Andrew Hanson, Midwest Env'tal Advocates 608-251-5047

“RapSheets” Expose Violations by 240 Animal Factories Including Three Wisconsin Plants
*Sierra Club Report & Online Database, Searchable by State and Operator,
Document Animal Cruelty, Worker Endangerment and Pollution Spills*

Madison, WI—Just weeks after the second-largest beef recall in history, the Wisconsin Sierra Club, joined by Family Farm Defenders, Concerned Citizens of Adams County and Midwest Environmental Advocates, released a report today exposing hundreds of criminal and civil violations committed by America’s largest animal factories. The report, *The RapSheet on Animal Factories*, documents convictions at corporate animal factories for animal cruelty, bribery, records destruction, fraud, worker endangerment, and pollution violations. The report includes a RapSheet for three Wisconsin plants ---Brakebush Brothers - Westfield; Green Bay Dressed Beef (American Foods Group) - Green Bay; and Packerland Packing Company - Green Bay for contaminated chicken and beef products. Neighbors of factory farms, consumers and reporters can search the database at www.sierraclub.org/rapsheets to see what's been going on in their communities.

“Environmental violations by the meat industry add up to a rap sheet longer than *War and Peace*,” said Caryl Terrell, Wisconsin Sierra Club spokesperson. “Unfortunately, unsafe working conditions, recalls, massive pollution, inhumane treatment of animals and other violations have become a common feature of industrial livestock production.”

Among other findings, the RapSheet documents 60 misdemeanor or felony charges against 50 companies and their managers, 43 public health recalls that total approximately 67,000 tons of meat, hundreds of manure spills, and over \$50 million in criminal fines. Violations exposed in the report include:

Brakebush Brothers operates a meat processing plant in Westfield, WI. In January 2002, the plant recalled 483,000 pounds of chicken products that were potentially contaminated with plastic. The products subject to recall were shipped to retail establishments in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin, and to wholesale establishments nationwide. The problem was discovered through consumer and retail complaints.

Green Bay Dressed Beef, also doing business as American Foods Group, operates a cattle slaughterhouse and processing plant in Green Bay, Wisconsin. In December 2000, the plant recalled approximately 1.1 million pounds of ground beef that may have been contaminated with potentially deadly E. Coli O157:H7 bacteria. The recalled product was distributed to grocery stores in 12 states. In August 2001, the plant had another recall of suspected E. Coli-tainted meat, involving approximately 530,000 pounds of ground beef that was distributed to retail establishments, wholesale establishments, and institutions nationwide.

Packerland Packing Company operates a beef processing plant in Green Bay, Wisconsin. In June 2000, the plant recalled approximately 196,000 pounds of ground beef products potentially contaminated with potentially deadly E. Coli O157:H7 bacteria. The recall was triggered by a positive meat sample traced back from a Bronx, New York establishment. The recalled beef had been sent to distributors and wholesalers in ten states.

"The Rapsheet shows that Wisconsin has fallen victim to the abuses by large animal factories," said Andrew Hanson, attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates, a Wisconsin non-profit environmental law firm. "Wisconsin needs a just and sustainable food production system that is supported by small family farms, not polluting animal factories that threaten our health and our environment."

"Wisconsin should respect family farmers who practice sustainable agriculture and not just put up with the leaking lagoons, worker abuse and filthy food coming from factory farms and corporate agribusiness," said John Peck, spokesperson for Family Farm Defenders.

Sierra Club's Animal Factory Rapsheet comes at the heels of a slaughtering company's efforts to build a new factory in Adams County, Wisconsin, with additional feedlots and a potential ethanol plant. Quality Beef Processors proposes a 1,000 head per day slaughterhouse, and plans to locate on the outskirts of the City of Adams near the main business district and residential areas.

Two local grassroots groups, Concerned Citizens of Adams County and Adams County Tourism, Inc. representing hundreds of individuals, have organized a joint campaign to stop Quality Beef from building their slaughterhouse near the City of Adams. They cite evidence that the slaughterhouse may cause odors, air pollution, water pollution, worker safety hazards, groundwater contamination, decline in property values, crumbling roads, traffic congestion, and a loss of tourism to the area.

"This confirms we already know about large slaughterhouses," said Angie Newberg of Concerned Citizens of Adams County. "We have worked so hard to fight the Quality Beef Slaughterhouse, and we're not going to give up. No matter how long Quality Beef wants to drag this out, we will continue to fight. Our quality of life and our livelihoods are at stake."

The RapSheet report highlights violations committed by ten of "America's Least Wanted Animal Factories." Meat companies who earned the title of "Least Wanted" include Buckeye Egg Farm, Cargill Pork Inc., ConAgra Beef Company, ContiGroup-PSF, DeCoster Farms, Foster Farms, Sand Livestock Systems, Seaboard Farms, Smithfield Foods and Tyson Foods. While the RapSheet report focuses on the largest offenders, an online database available on the Sierra Club website profiles more than 240 industrial meat factories that have violated public health and environmental protections. Because anyone can access the online database, it is intended to serve as a powerful tool for citizens who want to hold corporate polluters accountable and keep them out of their communities.

"Large-scale corporate animal factories pollute our air and water, endanger our health and drive responsible family farmers out of business," said Terrell of the Sierra Club "This report illustrates that factory farms are more factory than farm, and should be held to the same environmental standards as any other industry."

Despite repeated violations of environmental and public health laws, many of the companies highlighted in the RapSheets continue to receive millions of dollars every year from the School Lunch Program and other Federal Food Assistance Programs.

###

The *RapSheet on Animal Factories* is available online at: www.sierraclub.org/rapsheets

Wisconsin Plants in the RapSheet Report

- **Brakebush Brothers** operates a meat processing plant in Westfield, WI. In January 2002, the plant recalled 483,000 pounds of chicken products that were potentially contaminated with plastic.

The products subject to recall were shipped to retail establishments in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin, and to wholesale establishments nationwide. The meat was marketed under the labels Country Goodnees, CN, and Chik-Licious.

The problem was discovered through consumer and retail complaints.

- **Green Bay Dressed Beef**, also doing business as American Foods Group, operates a cattle slaughterhouse and processing plant in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

In December 2000, the plant recalled approximately 1.1 million pounds of ground beef that may have been contaminated with potentially deadly E. coli O157:H7 bacteria. The recalled product was distributed to grocery stores in 12 states, marketed under the B Bar Brand and Kroger labels.

In August 2001, the plant had another recall of suspected E. Coli-tainted meat. This time the recall involved approximately 530,000 pounds of ground beef that was distributed to retail establishments, wholesale establishments, and institutions nationwide. Some of the suspect product was marketed under the Kroger label.

American Foods Group was acquired in 1985 by Carl W. Kuehne, and consisted of the Green Bay Dressed Beef plant and the Huron Dressed Beef plant. American Foods, headquartered in Green Bay, later added Dakota Pork Industries and Sheboygan Sausage Company to the corporate fold. Source: As reported in documents in the files of the United States

- **Packerland Packing Company** operates a beef processing plant in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

In June 2000, the plant recalled approximately 196,000 pounds of ground beef products potentially contaminated with potentially deadly E. coli O157:H7 bacteria. E. coli O157:H7 is a potentially deadly pathogen that can cause bloody diarrhea and dehydration. The recall was triggered by a positive meat sample traced back from a Bronx, New York establishment. The recalled beef had been sent to distributors and wholesalers in ten states.

Since 1996, Packerland's Green Bay plant has received \$12.3 million for its sales to the School Lunch Program and other Federal Food Assistance Programs.

Packerland, founded in 1960, is the fifth-largest largest beef packer in the United States. The company slaughters approximately 5,200 to 6,150 cattle per day at four plants -- Green Bay, Wisconsin; Gering, Nebraska; Tolleson, Arizona; and Plainwell, Michigan. In fiscal 2000, Packerland had sales of approximately \$1.4 billion.

In September 2001, Smithfield Foods announced it had reached an agreement in principle to acquire Packerland Holdings Inc., which owns Packerland Packing. The transaction would give Smithfield -- the world's largest integrated pork producer and packer -- a position controlling approximately 7% of the U.S. beef market.

Source: As reported in documents in the files of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and in stories published by Feedstuffs Magazine.