



October 13, 2000

Chicago District
300 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 550 South
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Telephone: 312-353-5863

WARNING LETTER
CHI-02-01

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. James E. Bradley, President
Certified Grocers Midwest Inc.
One Certified Drive
Hodgkins, IL 60525

Dear Mr. Bradley:

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted an inspection of your food and grocery warehouse facility at 6800 Santa Fe Drive, Hodgkins, Illinois, March 29-31, and April 3, 7, 8, 12, and 14, 2000. At the conclusion of the inspection, you were presented with a form FDA-483, Inspectional Observations, listing objectionable conditions observed by the FDA investigators in the warehouse during the inspection. Samples of products showing evidence of contamination and filth exhibits were also collected during the inspection for analysis.

By virtue of our findings, products stored in the warehouse are adulterated within the meaning of Section 402(a)(3) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (the Act) in that they were found to contain rodent filth, and/or Section 402(a)(4) of the Act in that they were stored under conditions whereby they may have become adulterated. Specifically, our inspection found, and sample analyses confirmed, that:

In the dry storage area of the warehouse

- Five live rodents running from rodent gnawed product in cartons of dry soup mix in slot 52-1-401. Close examination found rodent nesting, four infant mice and fluorescing rodent urine in the tunneled food product.
- Rodent gnawed cartons of another dry soup mix in slot 52-1-201. Close examination found rodent nesting material, rodent excreta, and fluorescing urine stains on or in cartons of this product.
- Rodent gnawed cartons of another dry soup mix in slot 52-1-241. Close examination found rodent excreta and fluorescing urine stains.
- Rodent gnawed bags of flour in isle 44 of the dry storage area.
- Rodent gnawed bag of pet food in slot 65-1-386. Further examination found rodent excreta near and on the lot.
- Rodent gnawed cartons of [REDACTED] in slot 55-1-333. Close examination also found rodent nesting materials and rodent excreta around cans of the product.

- Rodent gnawed bales and bags of flour in slot 44-1-233. Close examination also found rodent excreta on and around the product.
- Further evidence of an active rodent infestation in this portion of the warehouse included:
 - Live mice seen near slots 62-1-053, 52-1-241, and 62-1-141.
 - Live mice on glue boards or in ketch-all traps near storage rack 53 and in the salvage/charitable goods area.
 - Dead mice near slots 57-1-384, and 43-1-454.
 - Rodent excreta, gnawed paper, and partially eaten food in slots 68-1-113, 63-1-244, 63-1-141, 62-1-214, 62-1-384, and 55-1-333.
- Live birds flying in the central portion of this warehouse and bird excreta on racks near slot 42-1-204. Eight cases of cereal in the salvage area showed evidence of bird excreta on them.
- Two cats were seen in the warehouse.

In the perishable portion of the warehouse

- Rodent gnawed bags of cheese in slot 40711.
- One live mouse in slot 4042 near stored [REDACTED] rings with rodent excreta and urine stains on cartons of yogurt. Five dead mice were in a ketch-all trap nearby.
- Rodents were observed in traps located in several areas of the perishable portion of the warehouse, as were rodent excreta.

General structural and other conditions

- Scores of truck dock doors and loading platforms were not tight fitting allowing gaps up to 2 inches at the base.
- Rail doors were not tight fitting over the tracks at ground level.
- Many areas of wall damage where holes and cracks were evident.
- Damaged food stuffs and paper debris were found scattered in many areas of the warehouse under and behind pallets and along walls.

Twenty one samples representing contaminated food products and filth collected during the inspection confirmed general rodent evidence and direct contamination of cheese, flour, nuts, and a number of dry soup mixes.

The investigators observed and reported you have taken many substantial steps to correct conditions encountered during the inspection, including:

Immediately setting up an inspection program to identify and destroy contaminated goods encountered in the warehouse;

Contracting with consultants and pest control services to provide guidance and control against product adulteration;

Instituting a food inspection program in the warehouse and total inspection of outgoing products with a black light to assure against distribution of rodent adulterated products;

Cleanup of debris, spilled and damaged stocks in the warehouse;

Repairing and adjustment of all dock doors;

Repairing damaged walls and sealing of holes and cracks in the building;

Repairing exterior building defects and providing a graveled rodent barrier around the warehouse exterior;

Instituting an inspection program on incoming products including black lighting, to guard against adulterated products getting into the warehouse;

Hiring a full time person to oversee sanitation and pest control in the facility; and

Preparing a HACCP plan for sanitation control in the warehouse for the future.

We acknowledge these corrective actions and encourage you to continue such activities as needed to preclude products stored in your firm becoming adulterated.

The above does not represent an all-inclusive listing of the violations noted during the inspection of your firm. It is your responsibility to assure adherence with each requirement of the Act and its regulations and to be vigilant that products received, stored, and distributed in interstate commerce meet the requirements of the Act. Failure to maintain these requirements may result in regulatory action without further notice. These include seizure and/or prosecution.

Please notify this office in writing within 15 working days after receipt of this letter of any further corrections you have taken or comments you wish to make concerning these violations. Your reply should be directed to the attention of Paul Boehmer, Compliance Officer.

Sincerely,

\s\

Raymond V. Mlecko

District Director