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Consumer Federation of America

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Leading Supermarket Chains Refuse To Sell Carbon Monoxide-Treated Meat

Recent press reports on the meat industry practice of packaging some case-ready meat and ground beef with carbon monoxide has resulted in the refusal of many of the nation's leading supermarket chains to sell carbon monoxide-treated meat.

The use of carbon monoxide in this type of packaging masks the natural browning of meat by imparting a bright red color on the meat's surface, which can hide the browning of meat normally associated with spoilage and temperature abuse.

Major national supermarket chains, including Wal-Mart, Kroger, Publix, Stop & Shop, A&P, Wegmans and Whole Foods (see attached) are not selling carbon monoxide-treated meat to consumers, and some have cited potential consumer deception as a reason for their decision.

"Publix does not use carbon monoxide to disguise the color of our meat," company spokeswoman Barbara Reid told the Atlanta Constitution-Journal. "Ethically, we disagree with it." Saying that the use of CO could be viewed as "deceptive," Kroger executive Lynn Marmer said the company does not sell CO-treated meat.

In a letter urging the Food and Drug Administration to rescind its approval of CO-treated meat, the Consumer Federation of America and Safe Tables Our Priority, a national, non-profit, volunteer, health organization dedicated to preventing suffering, illness and death due to foodborne illness, said carbon monoxide "hides the visual clues that consumers utilize on a regular basis to determine the safety and freshness of their meat," adding that "...consumers are unable to determine if the meat they are purchasing for their families is truly fresh."

"Supermarkets across the country are listening to consumer concerns about meat packaged with carbon monoxide," said Chris Waldrop, Deputy Director of the Food Policy Institute at CFA. "We applaud their decision to keep this deceptive practice out of their stores."

Meanwhile, Mark Klein of Cargill Meat Solutions, the company that sells much of the carbon monoxide-treated meat in the United States, recently provided this answer to a question posed at a hearing of the City of Chicago on March 23, 2006, about the consumer's right to know whether meat is treated with carbon monoxide:

> ALDERMAN HAIRSTON: My question to you -- I want you to answer the question that I asked you previously. In other words, the consumer doesn't have a right to know?
>
> MR. KLEIN: **I don't think they really would, you know, care to know.**

Chicago is the first municipality in the United States seeking to protect consumers by banning the use of carbon monoxide on fresh meat. The practice is banned in the European Union.

CFA encourages consumers to contact their representatives in Congress and call their local supermarket to protest this practice.

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Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of 300 consumer groups, representing more than 50 million Americans. It was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy. The Food Policy Institute at CFA works to promote a safer, healthier and more affordable food supply.

Supermarkets Not Using Carbon Monoxide Treated Meat

Supermarket Chain	Source
Wal-Mart[1]	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette *Some Raising Red Flag Over Use of Gas to Keep Meat in the Pink* (2/19/06) The Atlanta Journal-Constitution *Technology to maintain meat's color criticized* (2/23/06)
Kroger[2]	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution *Technology to maintain meat's color criticized* (2/23/06)
Acme[3]	KYW-TV, CBS-3 (Philadelphia, PA) *Eyewitness News at 6* (2/21/06, 6:17 PM EST)
Jewel-Osco[4]	WMAQ-TV, NBC 5 (Chicago, IL) *City Council Airs Beef About Red Meat* (3/23/06)
Stop & Shop[5]	New York Times *Stores React to Meat Reports* (3/1/06)
Publix[6]	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution *Technology to maintain meat's color criticized* (2/23/06)
Food Lion[7]	The Daily Press Corrections (3/28/06)
A&P[8]	New York Times *Which Cut Is Older? (It's a Trick Question)* (2/21/06)
Waldbaum's[9]	New York Times *Stores React to Meat Reports* (3/1/06)
Food Emporium[10]	New York Times *Stores React to Meat Reports* (3/1/06)
Super Fresh[11]	KYW-TV, CBS-3 (Philadelphia, PA) *Eyewitness News at 6* (2/21/06, 6:17 PM EST)
H-E-B[12]	Tribune-Herald *The meat looks fresh, but is it?* (2/23/06)
Meijer[13]	Grand Rapids Press *What about local grocery stores?* (3/29/06)
Giant Eagle[14]	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette *Some Raising Red Flag Over Use of Gas to Keep Meat in the Pink* (2/19/06)
Pathmark[15]	New York Times *Which Cut Is Older? (It's a Trick Question)* (2/21/06)

[1] According the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), Wal-Mart Supercenters is the largest supermarket chain in the United States by 2004 grocery sales
[2] The Kroger Co. is the second largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[3] Acme is a subsidiary of Albertson's Inc., the third largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[4] Jewel-Osco is a subsidiary of Albertson's Inc.
[5] Stop & Shop is a subsidiary of Ahold USA Inc., the sixth largest supermarket chain in US (FMI)
[6] Publix Super Markets Inc. is the eighth largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[7] Food Lion is a subsidiary of Delhaize America, the 9th largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[8] A&P is a subsidiary of Great A & P Tea Co., the 11th largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[9] Waldbaum's is a subsidiary of Great A & P Tea Co.
[10] Food Emporium is a subsidiary of Great A & P Tea Co.
[11] Super Fresh is a subsidiary of Great A & P Tea Co.
[12] H.E. Butt Grocery Co. is the 13th largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[13] Meijer, Inc. is the 14th largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[14] Giant Eagle, Inc. is the 17th largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[15] Pathmark Stores, Inc. is the 19th largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)

Whole Foods[16]	Saint Paul Pioneer Press *Meat Color Treatment Draws Fire* (3/1/06)
Wegmans[17]	Buffalo News *This is a Debate You Can Sink Your Teeth Into* (2/22/06)
Spartan Stores[18]	Grand Rapids Press *What about local grocery stores?* (3/29/06)

[16] Whole Foods Market, Inc. is the 20th largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[17] Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. is the 22nd largest supermarket chain in the US (FMI)
[18] Spartan Stores owns and operates 54 supermarkets and 20 deep-discount drugstores in Michigan and Ohio