



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Grain Inspection,  
Packers and Stockyards  
Administration

Stop 3601  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250-3601

OCT 29 2002

Mr. Brent Blackwelder  
President  
Friends of the Earth  
1025 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Third Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005-6303

Dear Mr. Blackwelder:

Thank you for your letters dated September 13, 18, and 24, 2002, expressing your concerns about the disposition of feed corn on the Rosman farm in Harlan, Iowa. We have been asked to respond to your correspondence for Secretary Ann M. Veneman.

The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), share your concerns over the movement of any grain lot that is suspected of containing harmful toxins. We are committed to assuring a safe food supply in the U.S. market and work closely with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on food and feed safety issues.

Currently, ARS scientists are testing the corn to determine if it contains a novel toxin that might impact swine production. The results of these tests, if positive, will only be indicative of the need for future research on the possible relationship between the toxin and reproduction. However, we don't expect these tests to define a need for USDA to purchase a specific lot of corn for research to study the relationship between the toxin and swine reproduction.

GIPSA shares information with FDA on a routine basis to insure that agricultural products are directed to the appropriate feed, commercial, or industrial end-use. Although we share the responsibility of maintaining a safe food and feed supply, USDA does not have the authority to seize or directly purchase a lot of grain. FDA maintains jurisdiction in the area of monitoring and seizing adulterated agricultural products.

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We have been informed that FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) is monitoring the situation. CVM has been in contact with the Iowa State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, which has conducted an investigation of the relationship between the corn used for feed and the pregnancy rate of hogs. Iowa State will issue its report on the findings in the near future.

Again, thank you for your letter. We appreciate your action to alert us of this potential problem within the U.S. food and feed market.

Sincerely,



Donna Reifschneider  
Administrator

cc: Ann M. Veneman, Secretary, Department of Agriculture  
Tom Harkin, Senator, Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Chairman  
Richard G. Lugar, Senator, Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Ranking Member  
Charles E. Grassley, Senator, Budget & Finance Ranking Member  
Larry Combest, Representative, Agriculture Chairman  
Charles W. Stenholm, Representative, Agriculture Ranking Member