



Consumer Federation of America

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 25, 2006

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Most Consumers Are Concerned About Practice of Adding Carbon Monoxide to Meat, New Survey Finds

Washington, DC – Three out of four consumers were either very concerned or somewhat concerned about the practice of adding carbon monoxide (CO) to meat to make the meat appear bright red for up to several weeks longer than untreated meat, according to a new survey conducted for the Consumer Federation of America.

In addition, seventy-eight percent of consumers said that the practice of treating red meat with carbon monoxide is deceptive and sixty-eight percent would strongly support a law to make it mandatory that meat treated with carbon monoxide be labeled, according to the survey of 1,019 men and women administered for CFA by the Opinion Research Corporation in early September.

“Consumers are quite simply concerned about the addition of carbon monoxide to meat packaging,” said Chris Waldrop, Deputy Director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. “In fact, most consumers find the practice deceptive. The FDA needs to halt this practice immediately.”

Adding carbon monoxide to meat packaging increases the meat packers profit by reducing the number of times meat is repackaged. Adding a small amount of CO to prepackaged red meat makes the meat appear bright red for up to several weeks longer than untreated meat. CFA has written to the Food and Drug Administration in support of a citizen’s petition filed by Kalsec, Inc. in November 2005, asking FDA to prohibit this use of carbon monoxide in the packaging of fresh meat.

“It is clear that the FDA failed to consider the consumer deception inherent in this practice,” Waldrop added. “The agency simply ceded to industry pressure without adequately considering the impact on consumers.”

Survey Finds Most Consumers Oppose the Use of CO to Color Meat

Most consumers are concerned about the practice of adding CO to color meat and believe this practice to be deceptive, according to the survey.

- Sixty-three percent (63%) agreed with the statement that “the freshness of meat is directly related to the color of the meat.” By extending the bright red color of meat for several weeks longer than untreated meat, carbon monoxide masks the true color of the meat and consumers are unable to accurately determine if the meat is fresh.
- Three out of four consumers (75%) are very concerned or somewhat concerned about the practice of adding CO to meat to make the meat appear bright red for up to several weeks longer than untreated meat.
- Three out of four consumers (74%) also replied that CO-treated meat such as ground beef should not be allowed to have a 28-day shelf life, as required by the Federal government. The typical shelf life for prepackaged meat that has not been treated with CO is 10 to 12 days.
- In addition, over three-fourths of consumers (78%) said that the practice of treating red meat with CO is deceptive.
- Moreover, 68% of consumers would strongly support a law to make it mandatory that meat treated with CO be labeled.

A copy of the survey and methodology is available on CFA’s website at www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/CO_Meat_Consumer_Survey_Results_9.25.06.pdf and www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/CO_Meat_Consumer_Survey_Methodology_9.25.06.pdf

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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.