

1 MELINDA HAAG (CABN 132612)  
United States Attorney

FILED  
2019 JUN 13 A 10:34  
RICHARD W. HENNING  
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
9 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
10 SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

**VC**

11  
12 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

13 Plaintiff,

14 v.

15 ROBERT W. SINGLETON,

16 Defendant.

CR 14 0441  
CASE NO.

) VIOLATIONS: 21 U.S.C. § 610(c) and § 676(a) –  
) Distribution of Adulterated, Misbranded, and  
) Uninspected Meat; 18 U.S.C. § 2 – Aiding and  
) Abetting)

) SAN FRANCISCO VENUE  
)  
)

17  
18  
19 INFORMATION

20 The United States Attorney charges:

21 INTRODUCTORY ALLEGATIONS

22 At all times relevant to this Information:

23 1. Rancho Feeding Corporation (“Rancho”) was a livestock slaughterhouse located in  
24 Petaluma, California. Rancho was authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
25 to slaughter and process cattle, among other animals, for human consumption.

26 ///

27 ///

28 ///

INDICTMENT

1           2.     Robert W. SINGLETON jointly owned Rancho with J.A. J.A. was Rancho's President  
2 and General Manager, controlling the company's day-to-day operations. SINGLETON was primarily  
3 responsible for purchasing cattle and loading shipments of processed cattle for distribution.  
4 SINGLETON also managed onsite operations at Rancho when J.A. was unavailable.

5           3.     F.C. was Rancho's foreperson. As such, he was responsible for the staff and operations  
6 of Rancho's kill floor. F.C. was also primarily responsible for knocking cattle, the process by which  
7 cattle are stunned prior to slaughter.

8           4.     E.C. was Rancho's primary yardperson, responsible for receiving cattle and moving them  
9 for inspection and slaughter.

10   The Federal Meat Inspection Act

11           5.     The Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) was enacted to protect "the health and welfare  
12 of consumers . . . by assuring that meat and meat food products distributed to them are wholesome, not  
13 adulterated, and properly marked, labeled, and packaged." 21 U.S.C. § 602. The USDA's Food Safety  
14 and Inspection Service (FSIS) was responsible for implementing the inspection provisions of the FMIA.  
15 9 C.F.R. § 300.3(a).

16           6.     Cattle carcasses, carcass parts, and meat were deemed "adulterated" if for any reason  
17 they were "unsound, unhealthful, or otherwise unfit for human food." 21 U.S.C. § 601(m)(3). The term  
18 "misbranded" applied to "any carcass, part thereof, meat or meat food product . . . if its labeling is false  
19 or misleading in any particular." 21 U.S.C. § 601(n).

20           7.     The FMIA and its implementing regulations required inspection both before and after  
21 slaughter of all livestock and carcasses that could be used as human food. 21 U.S.C. § 604; 9 C.F.R.  
22 § 309.1. The ante mortem inspection required designation as "U.S. Suspect" of any cattle suspected of  
23 being affected with a condition that could cause condemnation of the carcass on post mortem inspection.  
24 9 C.F.R. Pt. 311. One such condition was epithelioma of the eye, also known as cancer eye. 9 C.F.R.  
25 §§ 309.2(e) and 311.12.

26 ///

27 ///

28 ///

1 8. The FMIA further required that all unadulterated carcasses and parts be marked  
2 “Inspected and passed,” while adulterated carcasses and parts were required to be labeled “Inspected and  
3 condemned” and destroyed for food purposes in the presence of an inspector. 21 U.S.C. § 604.

4 9. The FMIA prohibited the sale and transport in commerce of adulterated or misbranded  
5 cattle, carcasses, and parts of carcasses, which are capable of use as human food, as well as the sale and  
6 transport of any articles required to be inspected that were not so inspected and passed. 21 U.S.C.  
7 § 610(c).

8 THE SCHEME TO DEFRAUD

9 10. Beginning in mid to late 2012 and continuing through on or about January 10, 2014, in  
10 the Northern District of California and elsewhere, SINGLETON and others, including J.A., F.C., and  
11 E.C., engaged in a scheme to defraud its customers and the consuming public by knowingly and  
12 intentionally selling and transporting cattle carcasses, carcass parts, and meat that were adulterated,  
13 misbranded, and/or uninspected.

14 11. As part of this scheme to defraud, SINGLETON purchased cattle for Rancho’s slaughter  
15 operations from livestock auction houses in Northern California and Nevada, as well as from private  
16 farmers. Some of the purchased cattle exhibited signs of epithelioma, that is lumps or other  
17 abnormalities around the eye, and were thus less expensive than cattle that appeared completely healthy.

18 12. Ordinarily, E.C. or another Rancho employee moved newly-arrived cattle into one of  
19 several outdoor holding pens. J.A. or SINGLETON determined the order in which cattle would be  
20 processed for inspection and slaughter. At J.A.’s or SINGLETON’s instructions, E.C. moved specified  
21 cattle into a designated pen for ante mortem inspection by an FSIS inspector. Generally, cattle that  
22 passed the ante mortem inspection were moved directly into the “kill chute” and onto the kill floor,  
23 where they were knocked, slaughtered, tagged, and inspected again. Carcasses that passed this post  
24 mortem inspection were prepared for transport. Cattle that were condemned following ante mortem or  
25 post mortem inspection were deposited into the “gut bin.”

26 ///

27 ///

28 ///

1           13.     As part of this scheme to defraud, however, Rancho circumvented these procedures.  
2 Specifically, J.A. instructed F.C. to process cattle that had been condemned. At J.A.'s instruction, F.C.  
3 directed a kill floor employee to carve "USDA Condemned" stamps out of the cattle carcasses and to  
4 process the carcasses for transport and distribution.

5           14.     As a further part of this scheme to defraud, cattle exhibiting signs of epithelioma were  
6 moved into a pen known as "9A." Acting at SINGLETON's and J.A.'s instructions, E.C. swapped  
7 uninspected cancer eye cows for cattle that had already passed ante mortem inspection and were  
8 awaiting slaughter. F.C. knocked the cancer eye cows, and he or another kill floor employee at his  
9 instruction slaughtered them and disposed of their heads in the gut bin. F.C., or another kill floor  
10 employee at his instruction, placed heads from apparently healthy cows, which had been previously  
11 reserved, next to the cancer eye cow carcasses. This switch and slaughter of uninspected cancer eye  
12 cows occurred during the inspectors' lunch breaks, a time during which plant operations were supposed  
13 to cease. When the inspectors returned from lunch for post mortem inspections, they were unaware that  
14 the carcasses they were inspecting belonged to cancer eye cows that had escaped ante mortem  
15 inspection.

16           15.     As a further part of this scheme to defraud, Rancho processed and distributed for human  
17 consumption carcasses, carcass parts, and meat from approximately 101 condemned cattle and  
18 approximately 79 cancer eye cows between January 2013 and January 2014. Rancho mailed or  
19 delivered invoices to buyers in connection with each such distribution and, based on these invoices, the  
20 buyers mailed payments to Rancho.

21           16.     As a further part of this scheme to defraud and at SINGLETON's and J.A.'s instruction,  
22 Rancho compensated F.C. approximately \$50.00 for each condemned carcass or uninspected cancer eye  
23 cow carcass that Rancho distributed.

24 ///

25 ///

26 ///

27 ///

28 ///

1 COUNT ONE: (21 U.S.C. § 610(c) and § 676(a) – Distribution of Adulterated, Misbranded, and  
2 Uninspected Meat; 18 U.S.C. § 2 – Aiding and Abetting)

3 16. Paragraphs 1 through 16 of this Indictment are hereby re-alleged and incorporated by  
4 reference as if set forth in full herein.

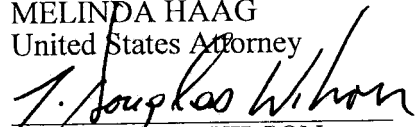
5 17. On or about January 10, 2014, in the Northern District of California and elsewhere, the  
6 defendant,


7 ROBERT W. SINGLETON,

8 and others did knowingly sell and transport in commerce cattle carcasses, parts of carcasses, and meat  
9 which were capable of use as human food, and which were adulterated, misbranded, and uninspected at  
10 the time of such sale and transport, and the sale and transport involved an intent to defraud, distribution,  
11 and attempted distribution of an article that was adulterated, namely a cancer eye cow identified by  
12 carcass tag number 321, and did aid and abet the same, in violation of the Federal Meat Inspection Act,  
13 Title 21, United States Code, Sections 610(c) and 676(a), and Title 18, United States Code, Section 2.

14  
15 DATED: August 18, 2014

MELINDA HAAG  
United States Attorney

  
17 J. DOUGLAS WILSON  
18 Chief, Criminal Division

19 (Approved as to form:  )

AUSA WEST