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Marketing and Regulatory Programs
Agricultural Marketing Service
Livestock and Seed Program
Meat Grading & Certification Branch

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CANADA BEEF GRADE-LABELING ISSUE

The Canadian beef grading system has created a "new" Canada Prime and Canada Choice grade label for boneless beef exports to the United States. Canada is allowing product being Graded Canada AAA to also be labeled Canadian Choice. The application of Prime and Choice grade names to Canadian product exported to the United States has created the potential for mislabeling. It has come to our attention that Food Safety and Inspection Services's (FSIS) Compliance Program has already identified one such mislabeling incident under Public Law (Pub. L.) 272 violation.

A retail store advertising USDA Choice Beef was using Canadian Choice product and placing USDA Choice stickers on the retail package. The Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch views this action as a direct violation of Pub. L. 272 by representing Canadian beef as being USDA graded. FSIS Directive 6810.1, Rev. 2, Grademark Labeling on Meat and Poultry Products, states under VI,A,2,c,(3). "When wholesale or retail cuts from officially graded carcasses are to be labeled or identified with official grade names, such cuts or containers must bear the *official USDA grademark* -- Prime, Choice, Select, etc., -- as applied by a USDA grader..." Since the Canadian grading system is not officially recognized as being equivalent to the USDA grading system, the grades are not interchangeable.

Effective immediately, all MGC Branch employees conducting Pub. L. 272 reviews will be aware of the potential for Canadian Prime/Choice beef being relabeled as USDA Prime/Choice at retail level. If this practice is discovered, the store shall be documented for a Pub. L. 272 noncompliance, and a followup review will be conducted.

On the other hand, a retail store would be in compliance with Pub. L. 272 if the retail package is labeled Canadian Choice. If you have any questions concerning this issue, contact your supervisor.

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