



Consumer Federation of America



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Consumer Federation of America and Safe Tables Our Priority
Urge FDA to Prohibit Use of Carbon Monoxide in Fresh Meat Packaging**

Consumer Federation of America and Safe Tables Our Priority submitted a letter today (attached) to the Food and Drug Administration, urging the FDA to prohibit the use of carbon monoxide in the packaging of fresh meat. A copy of the letter was also sent to Dr. Barbara Masters, Administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

FDA has established the use of carbon monoxide in packaging of fresh meat as "generally regarded as safe" (GRAS) in response to two petitions submitted by Precept Foods, Inc., and Pactiv Corporation. Kalsec, Inc. submitted a citizen's petition on November 15, 2005 requesting FDA to prohibit the use of carbon monoxide in the packaging of fresh meat. CFA and S.T.O.P. have submitted a letter to FDA in support of this Kalsec petition.

In the letter, CFA and S.T.O.P. state that FDA's acceptance of the use of carbon monoxide to displace oxygen in some packaging of case-ready red meat and ground meat products presents a considerable food safety concern for consumers. Carbon monoxide reacts with myoglobin in the meat to produce a bright red color, typically an indication of freshness in meat. However, this coloration has been found to last beyond the time of spoilage, thus masking the meat's true color and potentially misleading consumers into thinking that the meat is fresher than it actually is. The use of carbon monoxide thus hides the visual clues that consumers use to determine the safety and freshness of their meat.

While carbon monoxide itself may not be dangerous to health, CFA and S.T.O.P. hold that it should not be "generally regarded as safe" when it is used to mask the fact that meat is old enough to have lost its natural red color. Older meat is more likely to have higher levels of spoilage and pathogenic bacteria. A bright red color produced by carbon monoxide may disguise the fact that a meat product has been subject to temperature abuse and therefore could carry a heavier load of pathogens.

CFA and S.T.O.P. urge FDA to prohibit the use of carbon monoxide in the packaging of fresh meat and rescind its "no objection" stance on GRAS notifications for Pactiv Corporation and Precept Foods, Inc.

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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.

Safe Tables Our Priority is a national, non-profit volunteer health organization dedicated to preventing suffering, illness and death due to foodborne illness by advocating sound public policy, increasing awareness and education, and providing victim assistance.