

'It's 100 Percent Beef': Company on Defensive as It Closes Plants



By Jim Avila | ABC News – Mar. 27-12

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• 'It's 100 Percent Beef': Company ...

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After two weeks of no comments, Beef Products Inc., the maker of "lean, finely textured beef," a product now known by the critics' term for it, "pink slime," came out swinging today during a news conference to announce the temporary closing of several facilities.

The company said that it was suspending all operations at three of its four plants in Texas, Kansas and Iowa. Its headquarters in Sioux City, S.D., would remain.

It said today that it would continue to pay its workers for 60 days as it launches a public relations program designed to restore confidence in its product.

"After that 60-day period is over, if we haven't been able to resume operations again by then, we believe we won't have a decision other than to formally terminate those employees' employment,"

said Rich Jochum, the company's corporate administrator.

The company blamed social media and news organizations, specifically ABC News, for what it called a gross misrepresentation of its product and process.

"What should we label it? It's 100 percent beef," asked Regina Roth, the company's executive vice president. "What do you want us to label it? I'm not prepared to say it's not beef because it's 100 percent beef."

She said that the company would "attack" the misconceptions in consumers' minds through social media.

"What we're going through is not something any other companies want to ... have to endure," Roth said.

Two former scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture who reviewed the product advised against using it in ground beef and told ABC News that it was not the same as ground beef.

"It's not fresh ground beef. It's a cheap substitute being added in," microbiologist Gerald Zirnstein said.

The scientists added that the filler was not as nutritious as ground beef, though the company disputed that. An industry website noted that a side-by-side comparison of [nutrition labels](#) showed "90 percent lean beef trimmings and 90 percent lean ground beef have substantially identical nutritional value. And all USDA certified ground beef [with or without lean finely textured beef] found in your grocery store is considered to be a good or excellent source of 10 essential nutrients including protein, iron, zinc and B-vitamins."

The low-grade trimmings used to produce lean, finely textured beef come from the parts of the cow most susceptible to

contamination, often close to the hide, which is highly exposed to fecal matter. But because of the treatment of the trimmings - after they have been simmered in low heat, separating fat and tissue using a centrifuge, they are sprayed with ammonia gas to kill germs - the USDA says it's safe to eat.

Last week, Kroger, [Safeway](#), SUPERVALU and Food Lion announced today that they would no longer carry the product because of consumer concerns. Walmart and Sam's Club also announced they would start offering beef that does not contain lean finely textured beef.

The USDA has said that in the fall, schools will be able to choose whether or not they buy hamburger that contains the lean finely textured beef.