



## **Meat Packing Plant Execs Plead Guilty to Selling \$1 Million in Adulterated Ground Beef to Federal Bureau of Prisons**

Two meat packing plant executives today pleaded guilty to their role in a scheme to sell more than \$1 million of adulterated meat — including whole cow hearts labeled as “ground beef” — to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, announced U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas Erin Nealy Cox.

West Texas Provisions, Inc. president Jeffery Neal Smith, 49, and operations manager Derrick Martinez, 43, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to defraud the United States before Magistrate Judge Lee Ann Reno Tuesday afternoon.

According to plea papers, the defendants admitted to selling more than 775,000 pounds of uninspected, misbranded, or adulterated meat to 32 prison institutions in 18 states, for which BOP paid \$1,011,166.72.

In violation of the Federal Meat Inspection Act, West Texas Provisions marketed its products as USDA inspected when, in fact, it was processed without inspection, defendants admitted.

Plea papers indicate the company processed whole cow hearts — not permitted in ground beef products — and labeled it “ground beef.” They kept the whole hearts offsite until inspectors left the premises, then processed the hearts on nights and weekends, when inspectors weren’t working.

They often kept the lights off inside the facility while processing uninspected meat, hid uninspected meat in the freezer while inspectors were in the building, and distracted inspectors from looking at the product, they admitted.

Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Martinez face up to five years in prison. A sentencing date has not yet been set.

The Department of Justice Office of Inspector General and the Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Sean Taylor is prosecuting the case.

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