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US company accused of knowingly supplying tainted feed



By Jane Byrne

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Ohio based Shur-Green Farms sold contaminated soy oil soon after an earlier shipment of the product was responsible for causing losses of \$1 million and the death of 57,000 turkeys at a network of family farms in Michigan, alleges the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The US federal agency, in a **warning letter** to the recycling company last month, said the firm intentionally misrepresented industrial

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processing waste as soy oil from a large food manufacturer in a shipment to an animal feed distributor in September 2014.

The FDA said the animal feed product contained high levels of lascadoil, which is a combination of oleic acid, soy oil, and lasalocid sodium, a compound used in animal drugs.

The agency's warning letter noted how this was a repeat of a previous violation by Shur-Green Farms:

This "was not the first time you distributed an adulterated animal food product. On July 30, 2014, your firm transported a load of lascadoil to [a distributor]. The sale load of lascadoil was brokered by [a distributor] and was implicated in the contamination of feed with lascalocid sodium that resulted in the loss of 57,700 turkeys.

This feed contamination event also resulted in 35,900 head of swine being held from market for 29 days and the land filling of over 500 tons of withdrawn contaminated feed."

The FDA communication – dated 24 April 2015 - gave Shur-Green Farms 15 days to notify the federal agency in writing of the actions it has taken to ensure these breaches do not recur.

FeedNavigator filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) with the FDA to access the company's response to the accusations but no feedback was forthcoming prior to publication.

Joint USDA and FDA inquiry

The FDA and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been carrying out a joint investigation into the August 2014 contamination incident, where turkeys at Sietsema Farms exposed to the feed tainted with Lascadoil died before they made it to market.

Megan Bensette, a spokesperson for the FDA, told us yesterday that it remains an open investigation at this time. *"The FDA is working to assure the company is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations,"* she added.

The FDA and the USDA worked closely with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) over the turkey deaths.

State investigation

James Averill, Michigan state veterinarian and director of the animal industry division of MDARD, briefed that state's commission on agriculture on 21 January 2015 on the various actions taken by interested Michigan parties to contain the incident last summer.

His briefing was said to be the first time the case was made public.

And, Jennifer Houlton, director of communications for MDARD, told FeedNavigator earlier this year:

"This contamination incident underlines the importance of having a state feed testing program. The rapid actions of MDARD, in collaboration with other agencies, ensured the supply of safe food in the state.

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Essentially, MDARD identified a safety issue in August, and, as part of our investigation process, it became evident that feed was the only common denominator between the birds.

We notified the FDA and the USDA of a possible toxicity related to feed and also to the high level of Lasalocid, an animal drug that is approved for use in poultry to prevent coccidiosis.

Upon further inquiry, the MDARD investigators discovered a link between the turkey contamination incident and the detection of adulterated grease in swine feed.”

Lasalocid levels

Lasalocid, which is not approved for swine, was detected in samples of that grease.

Averill's report shows that the safe dosage level regarding the use of Lasalocid in turkey feed is 68 to 113 grams per ton but levels found in the dead turkeys at Sietsema Farms were much higher than that.

And the samples of swine feed from the same farm revealed the presence of up to 1,510 grams per ton of the drug, which raised the red flag for investigators.

Meanwhile, on October 23 last year Shur-Green Farms issued a **voluntarily recall** of lots of soy oil containing Lascadoil. The company said its decision to recall the product was the result of turkey deaths.

The Michigan Small Farm Council, commenting on the tainted feed incident said: “More is sure to be revealed as investigations continue, but two things are already clear. One is that we can't trust food producers to self-regulate to ensure a safe food supply for consumers.

Two is that we can't trust our state government to notify us when serious food contamination issues occur; Governor Snyder has yet to acknowledge that a major feed contamination issue occurred in Michigan on his watch, and neither Governor Snyder nor MDARD has issued a single press release on this issue.”

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