

Chronicling pink slime's fall from grace

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The process for producing what has become known as "pink slime" actually seemed like a triumph of technology in an industry haunted by the specter of food poisoning and, at one point, even got rave reviews in the news media, according to an article in the current issue of *Chemical & Engineering News*. *C&EN* is the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society.

In the article, Carmen Drahl, *C&EN* associate editor, points out that lean finely textured beef's fall from grace is a case study in what can happen when consumers interested in making informed choices about their food clash with a company that lacks transparency about a mysterious-sounding process. The article explains that South Dakota-based Beef Products, Inc., makes lean finely textured beef (LFTB) from pieces of meat left over after butchering a cow for roasts and steaks. These irregular bits are heated to remove the fatty part of the meat, then exposed to a puff of ammonia gas to kill any remaining bacteria. The LFTB is blended with other trimmings to make ground beef, and Drahl notes that the ammonia content of the final product is lower than the amount in salami or bleu cheese.

Drahl explains, however, that popular opinion has turned against LFTB. A former scientist from the U.S. Department of Agriculture coined the term "[pink slime](#)," and public revulsion grew. The article quotes food-safety attorney Sarah Klein, who explains that while there is no evidence the process is dangerous to consumers, safety is just one of the influences on customer choices. Klein adds: "The industry could do a better job of educating consumers about the benefits of not wasting parts

of an animal, to avoid the public outcry that happens when people feel they've been misled."

More information: cen.acs.org/articles/90/i17/Pink-Slime.html

Provided by American Chemical Society

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