



147 Shore Drive • Somerville, Massachusetts 02145  
(617) 666-5958 • [edgar@consumerworld.org](mailto:edgar@consumerworld.org)  
[www.consumerworld.org](http://www.consumerworld.org)

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CONTACT: Edgar Dworsky  
617-666-5958

## **MASSACHUSETTS SUPERMARKETS STAKE OUT POSITIONS ON “PINK SLIME” IN GROUND BEEF**

### **But Shoppers in the Dark Without Mandatory Labeling**

#### ***Walmart, BJ's Wholesale Club, Supervalu (Shaw's) to Carry Pink Slime-Free Beef***

(BOSTON, March 22) -- An ABC News investigative report earlier this month found that 70% of ground beef at supermarkets nationally has been mixed with “pink slime” – a filler made from scraps of meat and fat trimmings previously used in dog food. But what about supermarkets here in Massachusetts? Are they selling pink slime-laced ground beef?

Consumer World asked a dozen supermarkets and warehouse clubs on Wednesday, and found stores split into three camps: those planning to stop using it, those who defend the use of pink slime, and those that never have used it.

“As the roar of consumers and the media hits a peak on this issue, a trend seems to be developing among larger chains to stop carrying ground beef with pink slime,” commented Consumer World founder Edgar Dworsky. “The problem is, without mandatory labeling rules, shoppers don’t know which products contain it, and which do not.”

Lean finely textured beef (“LFTB”), commonly called pink slime, is a cheap meat filler made from leftover beef trimmings that are heated slightly to separate the fat, and then often treated with ammonium hydroxide to kill the bacteria. It is then formed into frozen blocks to be added to ground beef by processors.

BJ’s Wholesale Club acknowledges that certain types of fresh ground beef and frozen beef patties it carries contain up to 10% pink slime. But, in a move following some other national retailers like Safeway, BJ’s says it will only be selling BLBT-free (boneless lean beef trimmings) and LFTB-free fresh ground beef as of April 7. LFTB-free frozen burgers will be available starting April 20, it said.

Shaw’s/Star Market tells Consumer World that as of yesterday, March 21st, they would no longer purchase fresh ground beef with LFTB. Hannaford said today it would eliminate any ground beef with pink slime. And Walmart also says that despite

the fact that the product is recognized as safe, it would soon be offering fresh ground beef without pink slime. It is unclear, though, if that will be the sole type of ground beef that it will sell.

On the other hand, Stop & Shop, Market Basket, and Wegman's say that except for some varieties mostly of the organic type, much of their ground beef contains pink slime, but that their processing plants use a safer antibacterial agent on the meat scraps.

**UPDATE MARCH 22, 5PM:** Stop & Shop/Giant announced they will no longer carry ground beef with pink slime. **UPDATE March 23:** Wegman's will phase out LFTB.

In the "not in our stores" camp, are Foodmaster, Roche Bros., Whole Foods, and Costco.

"All of our fresh hamburg is made with in-store trimmings and fresh product," John Andrew DeJesus, President of Foodmaster, Inc., tells Consumer World. "We are demanding that all companies that want to sell us frozen or prepacked burgers give us a certificate guaranteeing there is no pink slime in their product."

Roche Bros. echoes Foodmaster's position, saying they "only use whole muscle meats of quality beef, and absolutely no additives."

Whole Foods also confirms to Consumer World that all its ground beef, both fresh and frozen is pink slime-free, as does Costco. Price Chopper said that none of its fresh ground beef contains LFTB, but it is awaiting word from its suppliers on whether its frozen patties have it.

**UPDATE March 23:** Big Y has confirmed that neither its fresh ground beef nor its frozen patties contains LFTB.

The issue of pink slime came to the public's attention last year when chef Jamie Oliver on his TV program, "Food Revolution," disclosed that pink slime was in the ground beef served to children in public schools.

More recently, a former USDA scientist, who has been railing against pink slime since 2002, contacted ABC News and told them that consumers were not getting the fresh ground beef they expected, and therefore were victims of "economic fraud." Others have questioned the safety of the product, as well as its sensory quality in terms of taste, texture and smell.

Government officials and some supermarket executives and meat industry experts contend that pink slime is safe, and since it is not considered an additive, meat containing it is not required to be specially labeled. The USDA, however, has just announced that starting next September, schools can choose whether or not to serve ground beef that contains pink slime.