Chinese lash back at U.S. over food fiasco

By Tom Johnston on 5/28/2007 for Meatingplace.com

Tired of being dragged through the mud, Chinese government and food-industry officials said the United States also should absorb some blame for a food-safety breach that forced a massive pet-food recall and subsequent farm-animal quarantines.

(See China to U.S.: Be gentle about the melamine mess on Meatingplace.com, May 17, 2007.)

Beijing is investigating the problem, stemming from two Chinese export companies that used wheat gluten to bolster the apparent protein content of pet food. U.S. investigators have found that the ingredient contained melamine, an industrial chemical used in making plastics, and melamine-related compounds, and believe the combination of the two killed pets and tainted farm feeds across the country.

China has since banned melamine use in food products and detained managers at the two companies believed to have intentionally laced the pet food.

Meantime, Chinese officials warn that U.S. food companies need to use more caution in their purchasing processes.

"Officials like me in the Chinese government can supervise the producers here, but U.S. companies doing business with Chinese companies must also be very clear about the standards they need, and don't just look for a cheap price," Yuan Changxiang, a deputy director in the ministry charged with inspecting imports and experts, said, as reported by USA Today.

Jin Zemin, general manager of Shanghai Kaijin Bio-Tech, which makes wheat gluten, added, saying U.S. importers "want cheaper prices, but that can come at a cost. You should know exactly where the products you buy are coming from. Don't just look at price."

Chinese and U.S. officials talked trade this week in Washington. Among the issues was U.S. concerns about contaminated food imports from China, according to USA Today.