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Citizenship

Dare Greatly

Nature
Think Boldly
Live
Passionately



THEODORE ROOSEVELT

PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

Hands-On History Activity

TR'S MEAT INSPECTION COMMITTEE

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TR'S MEAT INSPECTION COMMITTEE

On February 26, 1906, Upton Sinclair published his book *The Jungle*, which highlighted problems in the meatpacking industry—specifically in Chicago, Illinois. The five largest meatpacking companies were known as the “Beef Trust” and were located in Chicago’s Packingtown area.

Sinclair’s book created such a public uproar that Theodore Roosevelt launched a number of investigations. The first was through the Bureau of Animal Industry in the Department of Agriculture (USDA).

When that investigation indicated serious issues with the stockyards of Chicago, Roosevelt asked the Commissioner of Commerce and Labor, Charles Patrick Neill, and social worker James Bronson Reynolds to investigate more thoroughly, specifically examining the claims made in Sinclair’s book, and to report back to him.

When Neill and Reynolds’s report confirmed the findings of the Department of Agriculture and violations mentioned in *The Jungle*, Roosevelt began to work with Congress to pass stricter regulations. He threatened to reveal the details of the report if legislation was not speedily passed to address the violations.

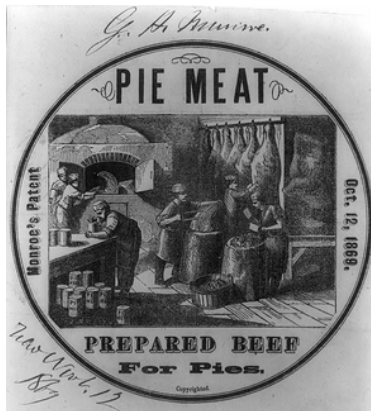
Roosevelt wanted legislation that would require stockyards and packing houses to meet certain standards before they could sell meat, which was proposed in an amendment commonly known as the Beveridge amendment due to its sponsor, Albert Beveridge.

Around four months after the publication of *The Jungle*, Congress passed the Meat Inspection Act, which President Roosevelt signed it into law on June 30, 1906, the same day he signed the Pure Food and Drug Act.

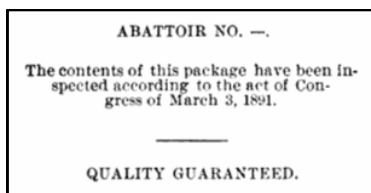
The law mandated USDA inspection of animals before they were slaughtered and processed for human consumption, replacing older Meat Inspection Acts, which had proven insufficient to regulate safety violations in the meatpacking industry.

In this Hands-On History activity, you'll learn more about the meatpacking industry of Roosevelt's time and the food safety violations of the Chicago stockyards while pretending to serve on Roosevelt's meat inspection committee.

Throughout American history, various information has been included on food products identifying what they contained. As food became more processed, more information needed to be included on labels to inform consumers about products and their quality. Below are four different meat labels that have been used in American history.



1869 Meat Label: Meat Inspection Acts were not passed until the 1890s, so prior to that, no company was required to put any information about government inspection on its labels. This is a label from 1869 for pie meat.



1906 Meat Label: While the government was required to inspect meat before the Meat Inspection Act was passed in 1906, inspections were only done *before* animals were slaughtered. Therefore, the meat could have been handled in unsanitary conditions after slaughter. This label was included in Neill and Reynolds's report about the condition of the meatpacking plants.



1914 Meat Label: After the passage of the Meat Inspection Act in 1906, the government inspected meat along all stages of processing. Consumers could look at the labels on processed meat to see if it had been government inspected. This label is from Swift Meats (one of the five big meatpacking companies) and was created in 1914—less than ten years after the passage of the Meat Inspection Act.



2013 Meat Label: A lot more information is included on labels today. In addition to noting government inspection, today's meat labels must also include safe handling instructions. This label was created in 2013—more than 100 years after the passage of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906.

SUPPLIES

Equipment Needed: You will need the handout and the page below, along with something to write with.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 On the next page, place the four inspection labels on a timeline from the earliest to the most recent. Feel free to cut them out and color them in if you would like.
- 2 After completing this task, answer the questions on the handout related to the labels and the meatpacking industry as you pretend to serve on Roosevelt's Meat Inspection Committee. Do you think they had a hard task? If the classroom has play food in the shape of meat, students could pretend to examine that meat as part of their investigation.

TIPS

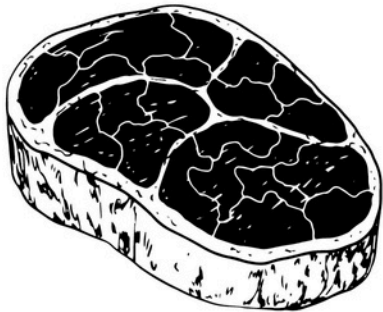


Think about meat safety today: How do you know that meat is safe to eat? Are there types of meat you shouldn't eat? Some people choose not to eat meat. Why do you think they make that decision? How do you feel about meat?



Learn more about beef grading: Beef grading is the process of evaluating the quality of beef. Different cuts of meat and different amounts of fat in meat can change the grade of the beef. Beef grading doesn't use letter grades like A, B, C, D, and F, but rather Prime, Choice, Select, Commercial, and Standard. The North Dakota Beef Commission has a variety of [classroom resources](#) available for students to learn more about beef.

PREPARED MEAT



The contents of this
package have been inspected.
QUALITY GUARANTEED.

Timeline Order: _____ of 4

GROUND BEEF 80% LEAN 20% FAT

Nutrition Facts

Serv. Size 4oz
Serv/Cntnr Varied
Calories 120
Fat Cal 10

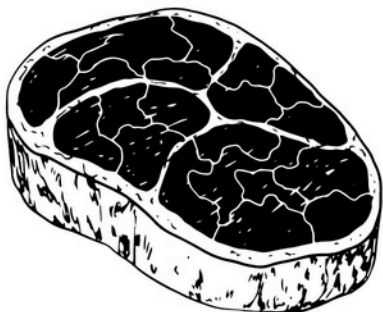
<u>Amt/Serving</u>		<u>Amt/Serving</u>
Total Fat	10g	Total Carb 0g
Sat. Fat	0g	Dietary Fiber 0g
Trans Fat	0g	Sugars 0g
Cholest.	70mg	Protein 28g
Sodium	55mg	
Vitamin A 0%		Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0%		Iron 8%

SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Keep refrigerated or frozen
- ✓ Cook thoroughly
- ✓ Wash surfaces and hands after handling raw meat
- ✓ Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately.

Timeline Order: _____ of 4

PREPARED MEAT



Timeline Order: _____ of 4



PREPARED MEAT

This meat is guaranteed to be of
finest quality meat from healthy,
young animals, prepared in factories
under government supervision.

Timeline Order: _____ of 4

SERVE ON TR'S MEAT INSPECTION COMMITTEE

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

UNCLEANLINESS IN HANDLING PRODUCTS

According to Neill and Reynolds's report, the packing houses threw meat on dirty floors and unwashed tables and moved meat from room to room in rotten box carts. If you were an inspector on TR's Meat Inspection Committee, what would you recommend be done about the uncleanness of meat handling?

TREATMENT OF MEAT AFTER INSPECTION

According to Neill and Reynolds's report, while the government inspected the slaughtering of animals, it did not inspect the meat after that. As a result, canned meat had labels that read "quality guaranteed" and "inspected," but government officials had not inspected those cans. (See the example of the 1906 meat label.) In some cases, Neill and Reynolds found dry and moldy canned meats. If you were an inspector on TR's Meat Inspection Committee, what would you recommend be done about the treatment of meat after inspection?

CHEMICALS IN MEAT PRODUCTS

According to Neill and Reynolds's report, many of the canned meats might have been treated with chemicals, a common practice at the time. Neill and Reynolds did not report on the chemicals because they were not experts in that field, but they suggested there could be dyes, preservatives, and chemicals in the meat. If you were an inspector on TR's Meat Inspection Committee, what would you recommend be done about the chemicals in meat products?