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Defendants Sentenced in UK Horse Meat Scandal

Judge notes suspicion of complicity

BY DAN FLYNN | MARCH 24, 2015

The first prosecutions brought in England following Europe's [2013 horse meat scandal](#) ended with one defendant getting a fine and another a short and suspended prison sentence, but only for what they've admitted doing. A Dutch trial getting underway today could bring a different outcome. Southwark Crown Court Judge Alistair McCreath did provide a lecture along with the sentences.



“The traceability of food products, here meat, is of critical importance in relation to public health,” the judge [said](#). “If meat causes ill health, then it is important that those responsible for investigating the cause of it should quickly be able to discover where the meat came from and trace it backwards ... to find where the problem lies and prevent the problem

escalating.”

But when it came to [sentencing](#), McCreath let 65-year-old slaughterhouse owner Peter Boddy off with a fine totaling about \$12,000 and suspended for two years a four-month prison sentence for slaughterhouse manager David Moss for falsifying an invoice.

The judge did note that the two men were not being sentenced for any role they might have played in the fraudulent substitution of horse meat for beef in the consumer market.

“It is impossible to avoid a suspicion, even a strong one, that behind the activities disclosed by this investigation was some degree of complicity, together with others – those who sold the live horses to the abattoir, and those who received the horse meat thereafter – in putting into the human food chain, under the guise of some other meat, what was in fact horse meat,” he said.

McCreath added that there was “substantial grounds to justify that suspicion,” and that while the prosecution might have the same suspicion, it did not have the evidence to bring broader charges.

Instead, the judge sentenced the pair to the allegations they admitted.

Boddy admitted that he failed to abide by European Union (EU) traceability regulations and failed to comply with “field to fork” traceability standards. Moss admitted that he forged a invoice for the number of horses sold in a Feb. 12, 2013, transaction.

Meanwhile, a [trial](#) begins today for Dutch meat trader Willy Selten in Den Bosch. He denies substituting horse meat for beef consignments, claiming that a storage mistake led to a mixup that eventually led to a 50,000-ton recall of European meat in 2013.

Dutch authorities believe Selten was at the center of a scheme that saw 300 tons of horse meat from Ireland, England, and the Netherlands processed and sold as pure beef.

The European food fraud scandal shocked retail consumers two years ago when authorities discovered horse meat being passed off as beef in numerous products sold at retail in major grocery stores chains and under brands associated with beef products.

Boddy operated a slaughterhouse in the Todmorden area of West Yorkshire, which Moss managed. Documentation was lacking as the slaughterhouse acquired at least 17 animals without records or original source information and allegedly no knowledge of where 55 other carcasses went. Boddy claimed 17 went to Italian restaurants.

Jason Feeney, chief operating officer at United Kingdom’s Food Standards Agency (FSA), [said](#), “We are pleased with the successful conclusion of this prosecution. The rules on food traceability are there to protect consumers

and legitimate businesses. Criminal activity like this across Europe contributed to the horse meat incident. Consumers need to know that their food is what it says it is on the label. FSA continues to support the ongoing investigations into the incident.”

In addition to the ongoing investigation, FSA and other government departments have been implementing the recommendations from the [Elliott Review](#) to bolster the integrity of the UK food chain.

This includes the establishment of the [Food Crime Unit](#), which is giving greater focus to enforcement against food fraud by analyzing intelligence, initiating investigations, and coordinating with other criminal and regulatory enforcement agencies.

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