

## **Minnesota Livestock Dealers Charged by USDA**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 22, 1997)--Bagley Livestock Exchange, Inc., of Bagley, Minnesota; Rich Prairie Livestock Exchange, Inc., of Pierz, Minnesota; and Joe Varner of Pierz, Minnesota, have been charged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture with failing to pay the full purchase price of livestock, resulting from the implementation of a plan to offset prior debts due from the agent of the unpaid seller. The two corporate respondents are registered with USDA as livestock dealers and/or market agencies. Varner is an officer for both corporations. The charges against these respondents were filed under the authority of the Packers and Stockyards Act.

Varner and the two corporate respondents have a right to a hearing on the Federal administrative charges. If the charges are proven, the parties could be placed under a cease and desist order, similar to a permanent injunction; suspended as registrants under the Packers and Stockyards Act; and assessed civil penalties.

The Packers and Stockyards Act is an antitrust, fair trade practice, and payment protection law. It is designed to ensure free and open competition, and to prevent unfair and deceptive practices in the marketing of livestock, meat, and poultry.

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