

**Statement by Bill Hawks
Agriculture Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs
July 17, 2002**

This Administration is committed to effective enforcement of all provisions of the Packers and Stockyards Act, including competition provisions. We constantly monitor competitive conditions in the livestock, meatpacking and poultry industries. We initiate investigations and investigate every complaint involving a potential violation and bring cases when warranted.

We have competition units in all three USDA Packers and Stockyards Programs' regional offices which conduct competition investigations. In addition, the Competition Branch at our Washington headquarters establishes investigation policy and provides coordination and direction to field investigators.

During fiscal year 2001, we conducted 27 investigations involving competitiveness issues. These included attempted restriction of competition, failure to compete, buyers acting in concert in the purchase of livestock, apportionment of territory, conflict of interest, price discrimination, price manipulation and predatory pricing. These investigations either are still open, were closed upon a finding of "no violation" or were resolved informally.

We continue to hire economists and legal specialists to assist with our efforts. We are currently in the process of hiring a Chief for our headquarters Competition Branch to develop a national program, work closely with economists and legal specialists in our regional offices, and maintain a close relationship with the Department of Justice, Commodities Futures Trading Commission and other agencies. USDA's Office of General Counsel also has increased the number of attorneys available for competition cases.

Producers and other market participants who have concerns should contact USDA's Packers and Stockyards Hotline at (800) 998-3447 to report a complaint.

#

USDA Release No. 4025.02