

Muenster Livestock Auction Commission, Inc. Suspended for 120 Days; Muenster Livestock Auction Commission, Inc. and Ronnie Austin Ordered to Cease and Desist Violating the Packers and Stockyards Act

WASHINGTON, April 15, 2009 - On March 25, 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration entered into a consent decision with Muenster Livestock Auction Commission, Inc. (Muenster), Muenster, Texas and Ronnie Austin (Austin), Ringling, Oklahoma.

Muenster and Austin have been ordered to cease and desist from:

- failing to deposit in Muenster's custodial account, in a timely fashion, amounts equal to the proceeds receivable from the sale of consigned livestock;
- failing to maintain the Custodial Account for Shippers' Proceeds in conformity with Packers and Stockyards regulations;
- using funds received from the sale of consigned livestock for any purpose other than payment to consignors and payment of lawful marketing charges;
- issuing custodial account checks in payment for livestock purchases made at other markets;
- issuing checks without having sufficient funds to cover checks;
- financing Muenster's market agency operations through the use of custodial account overdrafts;
- permitting any manager or employee to issue custodial account checks to replace their own dishonored checks, or for any other purposes of their own; and
- keeping custodial funds in certificates of deposit while maintaining a substantial negative balance in custodial account funds available to pay checks upon presentation.

Muenster and Austin are ordered to keep and maintain such accounts, records, and memoranda as fully and correctly disclose their transactions subject to the Packers and Stockyards (P&S) Act and regulations.

Muenster is suspended from operating under the P&S Act for a period of 120 days beginning May 1, 2009. The suspension will be lifted on August 29, 2009.

Austin is prohibited from operating as a market agency selling on commission during Muenster's suspension. The suspension does not apply to the Austin Cattle Company.

The P&S Act is a fair trade practice and payment protection law that promotes fair and competitive marketing environments for the livestock, meat, and poultry industries.

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Catherine M. Grasso 202-720-7201

Catherine.M.Grasso@usda.gov