

**GIPSA  
Press  
Release**

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Grain Inspection,  
Packers and  
Stockyards  
Administration

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Washington, D.C.  
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GIPSA Release 118-11

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**GIPSA Alleges Hardee County Livestock Market Corp.  
and Janice P. Wheeler  
Violated the Packers and Stockyards Act**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9, 2011 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) has found evidence that Hardee County Livestock Market Corp. (respondent Hardee) and Janice P. Wheeler (respondent Wheeler), Wauchula, Fla., forged the signatures of bank employees from The Muncy Bank & Trust Company and Wauchula State Bank – on documents provided to GIPSA.

The trust agreement listed The Muncy Bank & Trust Company as the trustee.

The standby letter of credit indicated that the funds were drawn on the Wauchula State Bank.

The Muncy Bank & Trust Company informed GIPSA that the Muncy Bank & Trust had no knowledge of a relationship nor had a relationship of any kind with respondent Wheeler. The bank further informed GIPSA that the signatures of bank employees on the trust agreement and standby letter of credit, respectively, were forged. As a result the bond coverage on file to cover respondent Hardee’s market agency activities was invalid. Respondent Wheeler admitted the forgeries.

GIPSA’s Eastern Regional Office requested that the Department of Justice institute criminal proceedings against respondent Wheeler. On September 28, 2011, a Grand Jury Indictment was returned against respondent Wheeler who was indicted in the United States District Court, Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division, for knowingly and willingly making and using false writings and documents containing materially false statement and entries in relation to a matter within the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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GIPSA also filed an administrative complaint against respondents Hardee and Wheeler on November 25, 2011, alleging that they sold livestock in commerce on a commission basis without maintaining an adequate bond or bond equivalent. The complaint can be found on the GIPSA website: <http://www.gipsa.usda.gov/psp/enforcement.html>. If the allegations are admitted, or proven in an oral hearing, respondents Hardee and Wheeler may be ordered to cease and desist from violating the Packers and Stockyards (P&S) Act, suspended, and assessed a civil penalty.

Respondent Hardee was engaged in the business of a market agency selling livestock in commerce on a commission basis and registered with the Secretary of Agriculture as a market agency to sell livestock in commerce on a commission basis.

Respondent Wheeler was president; 50% owner; registered agent; general manager and responsible for the direction, management, and control respondent Hardee.

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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