

# Hudson Foods defense may wrap up testimony

BY JAKE BLEED  
Senior staff writer

Defense attorneys for Hudson Foods and one of its employees, both charged with lying to government investigators after the nation's largest recall of E. coli-tainted meat, said they may conclude testimony and closing arguments today.

The lawsuit against Hudson Foods and the company's former quality control director, Michael Gregory, alleges Gregory and the company lied to government investigators after 25 million pounds of bad beef were recalled in 1997.

The charges allege Hudson Foods and Gregory lied about the amount of beef affected by E. coli to limit the scope of the recall. More than a dozen people in Colorado became ill after eating E. coli-tainted meat from Hudson

Foods.

Charges against another former Hudson employee, Brent Wolke, were dropped Tuesday after U.S. District Judge Warren K. Urbom decided the evidence presented by the government against Wolke was not enough to support the charges.

He also dismissed a charge of conspiracy to lie against both Wolke and Gregory. Gregory still faces a charge of lying to government investigators.

The charges were dismissed Tuesday after the government finished presenting its case against Hudson Foods, Wolke and Gregory, including the testimony of more than a dozen witnesses.

The defense, which started its case Wednesday, called two witnesses and asked Urbom to consider declaring the case a mistrial. Defense attorneys based the motion on the difficulty of continuing without charges against Wolke.

Urbom said he would wait to make a decision on the motion, adding that he wanted to consider whether the case should be dismissed without the possibility for retrial. Urbom said he would make his decision as soon as possible.

Defense attorney Ty Cobb criticized the government's handling of the case, saying the conspiracy charge was introduced only to allow otherwise inadmissible information into the trial.

"I have no respect for the way this case originated and was handled," Cobb said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jan Sharp, the government's lead prosecutor, said he disagreed with Cobb's comments, calling them inflammatory.

The Columbus-based Hudson plant was shut down after the beef recall. It was later sold to IBP Inc., which reopened it. Wolke still works at the plant. Gregory currently works for Tyson Foods.

# Kerrey, Stenberg ready for race

■ Kerrey will have to appeal to Republicans to win, and Stenberg will appeal to voters' values, say respective spokeswomen.

BY JOSH KNAUB  
Staff writer

Although the primaries don't take place until May, Democrat Bob Kerrey and Republican Don Stenberg are gearing up to face each other in the race for Kerrey's Senate seat.

Kerrey has no announced opponents for the primary.

And while Stenberg must best other Republicans hoping to face Kerrey in the November election, he and his campaign staff are talking about how to beat Kerrey.

Lincoln doctor Elliott Rustad has announced he will oppose Stenberg for the Republican nomination. Mary Beth Heaverin of Omaha is also running.

But Kerrey, the two-term senator, is positioning himself to face

Stenberg, the three-term attorney general, in November.

Christine Vanderford, a Stenberg campaign spokeswoman, said Stenberg had remained focused on a race with Kerrey since Stenberg announced he would run for Senate in January.

"We have not changed our strategy," she said.

Vanderford said Stenberg would appeal to Nebraska's Republicans, who outnumber Nebraska's Democrats by 130,000 in terms of registered voters.

She predicted Stenberg would ride the coattails of the Republican presidential nominee.

Nebraska voters traditionally give overwhelming support to Republican presidential candidates.

Vanderford said a Kerrey campaign mailing cited the Republican advantage in numbers as a concern.

Devorah Lanner, a spokeswoman for the Nebraska Democratic Party, said she expected Kerrey to defeat Stenberg in the general election.

"I fully anticipate that Bob Kerrey will be elected by a wide margin," she said.

## Election 2000

She said Kerrey would have to continue to appeal to the state's Republicans to win the election.

Lanner said though Nebraska's voters usually overwhelmingly choose Republican presidential candidates, Kerrey's name recognition and relationships with Nebraska voters would allow him to carry the election.

"Kerrey's name will be right after the presidential candidates on the ballot," Lanner said. "In a large part, Kerrey and the presidential contenders will be the top names that draw people to the polls."

Vanderford said Stenberg planned to beat Kerrey by appealing to Nebraska voters' values.

"Don Stenberg represents Nebraska values," she said. "Bob Kerrey represents Hollywood values."

Lanner said Kerrey must have a clear message to win.

"A candidate needs a strong message, a compelling message, that appeals to Republicans and Democrats," she said.



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