

NAME OF SYSTEM:

Meat Label Storage and Retrieval

ORIGINATOR:

**Consumer Protection Program
Consumer and Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250**

OBJECTIVE. To design and implement a document storage system within the Department's Meat Inspection Division that will eliminate the inefficient conventional case folder storage arrangement. Further, to insure that the new system will enhance the overall administration of the meat label approval program.

BACKGROUND. One of the responsibilities of the Meat Inspection Program is to approve the labels placed on meat or packages of meat products processed in commercial meat packing houses. All meat packing houses are required by Federal regulation to submit copies or sketches of labels for Department approval before being used on meat or meat products. Each label must meet specified Government standards with respect to the product information, such as color, quality, and kind of meat product. For example, transparent or semitransparent wrappings for such articles as sliced bacon or pork sausage should not bear colors that may give a false impression as to the leanness of the product.

Over 250,000 approved labels are on file in the Meat Inspection Division, with about 3,500 new label submissions received monthly. In order to properly administer and control the label standards program, the Division scientists and regulatory and administrative personnel need frequent information relative to approved labels. Somewhat the same information requirements hold true for the 2,000 Federal inspectors located at the various processing plants.

For some time the Division had wished to eliminate the cumbersome case folders containing bulky and odd-shaped label material.

The system designers eventually selected an aperture card system (punched cards with windows for microfilm images) as being the most feasible way of eliminating unsatisfactory storage conditions, while still possessing the necessary characteristics to assure the integrity of the labels and supporting papers. Other considerations prompting the selection of this system included its ability to prepare duplicate sets for use by the headquarters and the inspectors located at meat processing plants, to accurately machine sort and arrange in numerical sequence the master card decks, and to allow for use of 35-mm. color microfilm images in lieu of black and white in instances where color could better portray label features.

The aperture card selected as the storage medium is the standard 80-column punched card with an area of about 30 columns reserved for the insertion of the 35-mm. microfilm image.

THE NEW METHOD. The initial input to the new system is the packing house label forwarded to the Meat Inspection Division in Washington, D.C., for regulatory compliance. An aperture card is punched by a Division keypunch operator for each approved label. The punched portion of the aperture card includes such data as plant number, product code, date of approval, brand number, and product description. The coded data is also interpreted and printed across the top of each card for use in manual searches at headquarters and in field packing houses. The aperture cards are then held until the approved labels and associated papers have been photographed. The filming process enables the photographing of up to four or five images per aperture card. After development and inspection, the approved microfilm is placed into the aperture card window through use of a manually operated aperture card mounting machine. When a full batch of label images have been mounted, the newly accessioned cards are manually placed in the master file. This file is arranged numerically by assigned packing house number and by brand approval number thereunder.

The master aperture card file at the head-

quarters represents the basic inventory of approved labels, and only manual file searches are made of these interpreted cards. Viewing the labels and related correspondence is made possible by use of standard universal-type microfilm readers. The duplicate set of interpreted punched cards that does not contain the microfilm images is arranged by product code and may be used for machine searching on punched card equipment.

REMARKS. This aperture card application combines three recordkeeping methods into one overall system. It has the document storage features of microfilm plus the mechanized sorting, arranging, and reproducing potential of standard punched cards. Additionally, it

permits manual searching of interpreted cards.

In application, the system permits faster manual searches of a standard size deck of aperture cards than searches through a conventional file containing odd-size material. While file maintenance is currently the only mechanized phase of the system, the searching procedure could be mechanized with little disturbance to the daily storage and search routines.

While the most common use of aperture cards is for the dissemination, storage, and retrieval of engineering drawings, this system illustrates their usefulness in accommodating odd-sized documents or documents of eight pages or less.

MEAT LABEL STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL

