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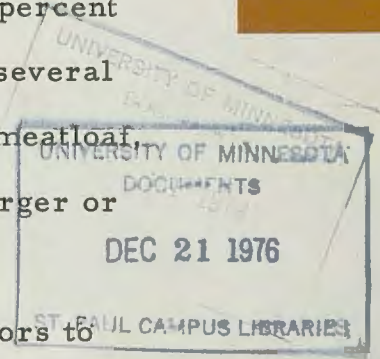
consumer radio briefs

Deboned Meat

Minnesota Extension Meats Specialist Richard Epley estimates that about a billion additional pounds of meat per year could be added to the nation's food supply by mechanical deboning.

The poultry industry has used mechanical deboning for ten years, but it is not allowed in red meat products. The process involves grinding up bones and the meat remaining on them after a knife separates as much meat from the bone as possible. Mechanical deboning machines then separate out the lean tissue from the bone.

If an Agriculture Department proposal is accepted, certain meat products will be allowed to include fifteen or twenty percent mechanically deboned meat. These include beef patties, several kinds of sausage, frankfurters, bologna, luncheon meat, meatloaf, scrapple and bratwurst. It would not be allowed in hamburger or ground beef.



Critics of the proposal claim it would allow processors to sell bone at meat prices. Epley says the percentage of bone in mechanically deboned meat will be very small and it will be ground extremely fine.

The U-S-D-A proposal calls for such small particle sizes that bone would not be detectable in the mouth at the levels permitted. The possible effects on the gastrointestinal tract lining are still being investigated. But the U-S-D-A says the mechanical deboning process may be safer than hand deboning. Sharp knives cutting around bones can incorporate slivers and chips of bone into the meat.
