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BPI Plans "Pink Slime" Lawsuit: UPDATE

UPDATE:Beef Products Inc. has filed a defamation lawsuit against ABC News for its coverage of a meat product that critics dubbed "pink slime," alleging the network misled consumers to believe the product is unhealthy and unsafe.

The Dakota Dunes, S.D.-based company is seeking $1.2 billion in damages for roughly 200 "false and misleading and defamatory" statements about the product. The lawsuit, filed in a South Dakota court Thursday, also accuses ABC News of improper interference with the relationships between BPI and its customers.

BPI attorney Dan Webb says the reports led consumers to believe the beef is not meat, but an unhealthy slime unfit for human consumption.

ABC News senior vice president Jeffrey W. Schneider says the lawsuit has no merit. ABC News is owned by The Walt Disney Co.

Beef Products Inc. plans to file a defamation lawsuit in the wake of a publicity storm over a meat product that critics have dubbed "pink slime." The Dakota Dunes, S.D.-based company said Wednesday that it will announce a lawsuit Thursday. A company executive and lawyer refused to name the defendant. Company officials have long insisted that the product is safe and healthy, and blamed the closure of three plants and roughly 700 layoffs on what they viewed as a smear campaign. The lean, textured beef trimmings were the subject of many media reports earlier this year, and also have drawn comments from television chefs and food commentators. The term "pink slime" was coined by a former U.S. Department of Agriculture microbiologist.

AP/KAKE