

Choice Canning says FDA shrimp refusals were for another Indian packer

Choice Canning said the three shrimp shipments rejected by the US Food and Drug Administration for traces of veterinary drugs were actually packed by Alpha Marine

By [Dan Gibson](#) | May 7, 2024 17:37 BST



📷 Shrimp in curry. Photograph by bonchon on Shutterstock.

The US' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) might've identified the Choice Canning Company as the producer of the three Indian shrimp lines it has refused entry into the US, but Choice maintains it was a different company using its name and registration number.

As [Undercurrent News](#) reported Tuesday (May 7), "Choice Canning Company Unit II, a division of Choice Trading Corp," is one of three Indian companies and one Chinese company to be identified as having its shrimp shipments refused entry by the FDA in April due to the presence of adulterants. In total, the FDA refused 15 shrimp entry lines from the four companies.

In the case of Choice, the shrimp was rejected by FDA's West Coast office on April 4 due to the presence of veterinary drug residues containing antibiotics, based on the federal agency's online records.

But it's a misunderstanding, and the company that was responsible for the stopped shrimp was instead Alpha Marine, a Choice spokesperson told [Undercurrent](#) on Tuesday.

Choice had been temporarily leasing a factory in the village of Dammanavaripalam, near Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh, while it awaited the construction of its new factory. Choice exited the lease of that facility at the end of September 2023, the spokesperson explained, at which point the factory's owner leased it to Alpha Marine.

"A new packer [Alpha Marine] took over the facility, and in the time it would take for them to transfer documents to the name, they shipped loads using Choice's name because the FDA approval for that plant still belongs to us," he asserted. "And they had a refusal, so the name coming out is Choice's name."

Choice maintains that it was not aware that any shipments were still being made from the former leased plant under its name until it saw the US FDA refusal letter on April 4.

"Choice had nothing to do with the shipment, this load was not packed and processed by Choice, and it was not sold to any of our customers," the spokesperson asserted.

The shipment in question, made on Nov. 10 last year, arrived in Los Angeles, California, on Jan. 19, only to be detained by the FDA on March 18. Choice told [Undercurrent](#) it does not ship shrimp to Los Angeles.

Choice provided copies of the bill of landing and FDA refusal letter to confirm its explanation. The documents identify Choice as the processor and packer at the factory in Dammanavaripalam, including the company's plant registration number, though it identifies Alpha Marine as the exporter of record.

The FDA said it refused 2,558 kilograms of size 31/40, 5,062kg of size 41/50 and 8,709kg of size 51/60 frozen raw peeled deveined tail-off (PDTO) vannamei.

[Undercurrent](#) has reached out to Alpha Marine for comment but was not able to reach the company by press time.

A turbulent two months for Choice

Choice has faced intense scrutiny over the past two months following allegations of falsifying documents, knowingly shipping antibiotic-positive shrimp to the US, and mistreating workers, [made by former general factory manager turned whistleblower Joshua Farinella](#).

For its part, Choice has heavily denied the allegations, noting in particular that it had never had a shipment to the US test positive for antibiotics with the FDA, a claim that appeared to have been broken by the latest action.

Farinella's allegations were directed at the main plant in Amalapuram that Choice had been leasing since 2022, while it waited for its new factory in Bapatla to finish construction and installation of equipment, and not this second plant that Choice had also been leasing until September.

Jacob Jose, Choice Canning's vice president of sales and marketing, told [Undercurrent last month](#) that the new Bapatla factory is expected to be fully operational by June, where it will process cooked, raw and value-added shrimp for the US.

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