

# Reagan wants to alter meat inspection laws

**United Press International**  
WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration is proposing changes in meat and poultry inspection laws to permit the Agriculture Department to reduce federal inspectors' visits to well-run meat processing plants.

Officials said they could improve productivity, redirect inspection efforts at problem plants where they are needed most and save money if Congress agrees to give the agriculture secretary discretion to decide the intensity and frequency of inspections.

The legislation was sent this week to Capitol Hill, where congressional hearings are expected to be held.

The change would not apply to slaughter plants, where each animal will continue to be inspected by federal employees. It would apply to inspections of processing of meat and poultry — previously inspected at slaughter — into a variety of foods, such as sausages, luncheon meats, frozen dinners

and soups. The law now states that each meat processing operation must be visited at least once a day. The proposed change would permit inspections once or twice a week if officials believed a plant presented no problems.

Under federal inspection are 551 meat and poultry slaughter plants, 5,382 processing plants and 1,788 plants that combine slaughter and processing.

Donald Houston, administrator of the department's Food Safety and Inspection Service, told reporters this week that the prime goal of the legislative proposal is efficiency, but also there would be about \$2 million in initial savings from the \$82 million cost to inspect processing.

The department spends another \$178 million to inspect slaughter of meat and poultry.

Under the proposal, the frequency of inspection visits at a processing plant would be determined by a set of criteria. One would be the nature and fre-

quency of a plant's operations. For example, Houston said, formulating cooked sausage, a high-risk operation in terms of food safety, should be inspected more closely than a low-risk operation of cutting steaks.

"Inspectors in processing plants are not there 100 percent of the time, and they never have been," Houston said.

Another factor would be the plant's history of compliance with inspection requirements.

"We know that certain parts of this industry we have to regulate very closely," Houston said.

A third factor would be the sophistication of a plant's own systems to monitor product quality.

That factor ties the proposal to an existing Agriculture Department voluntary quality control program, which permits federal inspectors in cooperating plants to use the plant's own quality control data to make inspection decisions.

# MacNeil, Lehrer get journalism merit award

**United Press International**  
LAWRENCE, Kan. — Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer, editors and co-anchors of public television's "The MacNeil-Lehrer Report," were presented the 1982 William Allen White Foundation Award for Journalistic Merit.

Wednesday's announcement marked the first time in the award's 33-year history it was shared by two journalists. The award is given to journalists who exemplify the late Emporia Gazette editor in "service to his profession and his country."

The public affairs program has been aired nightly during the week by the Public Broadcasting Service since October 1975, focusing on a single issue for each half-hour show.

MacNeil, a Canadian citizen, and Lehrer, a native of Wichita, Kan., and a graduate of the University of Missouri, first teamed on public television's Emmy Award-winning live coverage of the Senate Watergate hearings.

MacNeil began his news career in Canada, working for two commercial radio stations and the Canadian Broadcasting Co. He moved to England in 1955 as an aspiring playwright, but later returned to journalism with Reuters News Service.

He joined NBC News as a London correspondent and covered the Algerian civil war, the fighting in the Belgian Congo and the conflict over the construction of the Berlin Wall. He spent four years in NBC's Washington bureau and worked a year for the British Broadcast-

ing Co. before he joined the Public Broadcasting Laboratory in 1968.

As senior correspondent for public television's National Public Affairs Center for Television, MacNeil moderated "Washington Week in Review" from 1971 to 1973 and co-anchored reports of the 1972 presidential elections with Sander Vanocur. He covered impeachment proceedings and the resignation of former President Richard Nixon for the BBC.

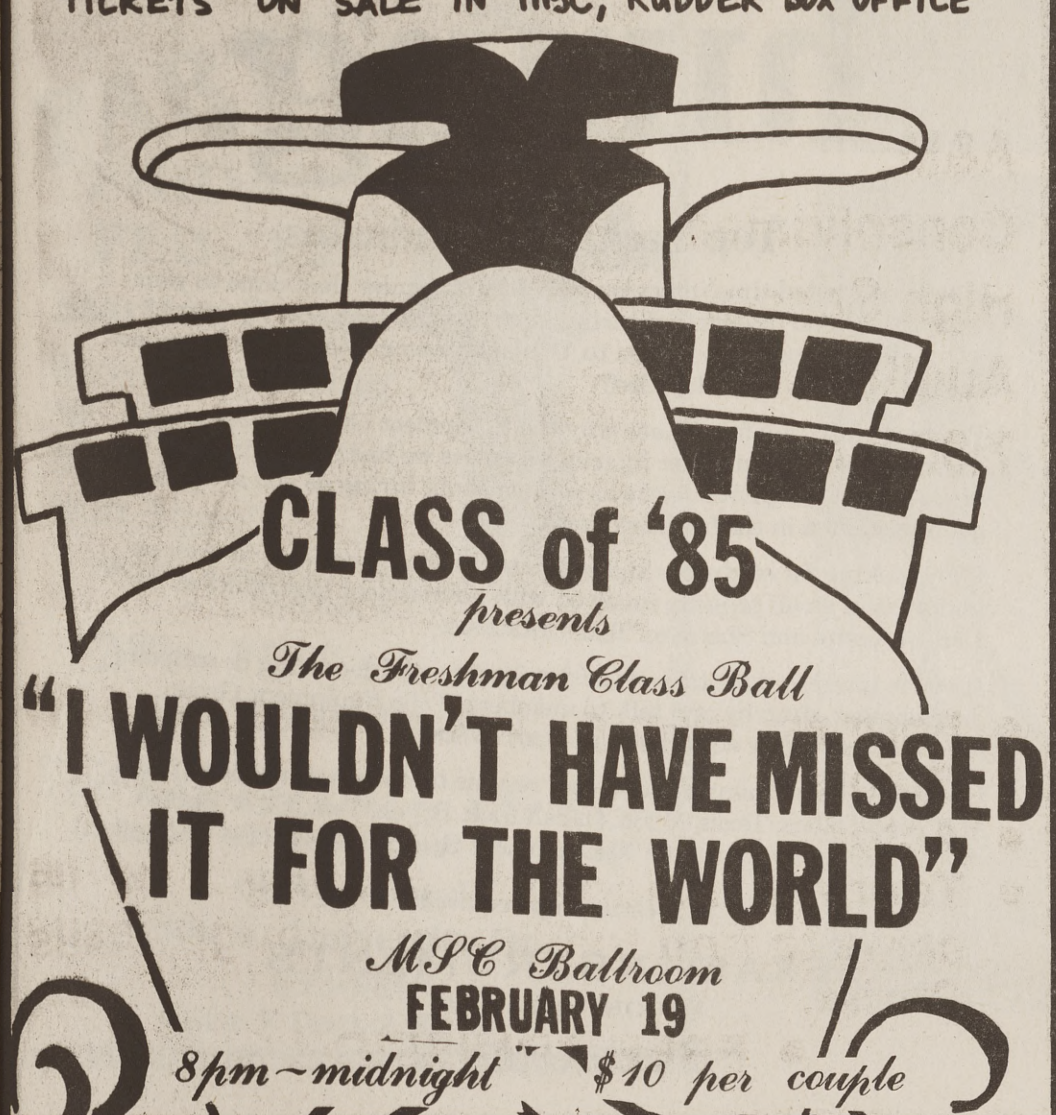
Lehrer's first public affairs reporting experience was in the print field as a reporter, political writer and columnist in Dallas. In 1968, he became city editor of the Dallas Times-Herald, then broke into television with Dallas' public television station where he was executive director of public affairs, on-air host and editor of the local nightly news program "Newsroom."

He also has been public affairs coordinator for PBS.

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