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FDA orders federal agents to confiscate 'starchblocker' from its manufacturers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal agents are seizing stocks of "starch blocker" pills from producers across the country who are defying a Food and Drug Administration order to halt traffic in the popular weight-loss products.

The FDA charges that the pills, which use a kidney bean extract, are classified as a drug and are marketed illegally because they have not been approved by the agency for safety and effectiveness.

Some of the producers in the \$100 million-a-year business are ignoring the FDA's July 1 order on the ground that starch blockers are a food product, not a drug requiring government approval.

The FDA announced Thursday that its request, U.S. marshals dispatched by the Justice Department have raided

six starch blocker manufacturers and distributors in five states since Sept. 17, and seized pills valued at \$481,000.

Other, unidentified producers will be raided as court warrants are obtained, said FDA spokesman Bruce Brown. He said most of the more than 300 manufacturers and distributors of starch blocker pills had complied with the agency's order to halt operations.

The six companies whose inventories have been seized were listed as American Diets Co., with plants at Cleburne, Texas; Orangeburg, N.Y.; Ooltewah, Tenn., and Tulsa, Okla.; General Nutrition Corp. at Arlington, Texas; Nashville, Tenn., and Pittsburgh; Phoenix Laboratories, Deer Park, N.Y.; and three other companies based in Tulsa, Eden's Own Products Inc., Naturade

Products Inc. and Holistic Products Corp.

Brown said General Nutrition, the biggest company raided so far, sells a 30-tablet bottle of starch blockers for \$9.95 or a 100-tablet bottle for \$22.95 through its 1,000 health food stores in North America.

The pills, invented by a Scottish-born biochemist from Elkhart, Ind., named J. John Marshall, have been sold at drug stores and supermarkets for about a year. They are widely advertised as designed to let people eat starchy foods without gaining weight.

The manufacturers say the pills block the action of alpha amylase, a protein that inhibits digestive enzymes, and allows starches to simply pass through the body.

The FDA says it continues to receive reports of adverse

reactions from starch blocker users, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pains and excess gas. Brown says 27 instances of hospitalization are being investigated.

House quits without vote on N-waste

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House of Representatives, rushing to adjourn until after the November election, began debate Thursday on legislation to provide for the storage and permanent disposal of high-level radioactive wastes.

But it was unclear whether Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., Chairman of the House Interior Committee, would be able to move the bill to a final vote before Congress recesses Friday.

The House approved four amendments to the bill Thursday night but still had another 32 amendments to vote on Friday.

But any action then will have to be sandwiched between a continuing resolution to keep the government in operating funds until Congress returns in November and the proposed balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

The waste bill would require the president to pick a site for the permanent burial of high-level radioactive wastes by 1987 with the facility to be completed by 1998.

The Hanford nuclear reservation has been mentioned as a potential site for such a waste dump.

The bill also would provide temporary away-from-reactor storage and the construction of a monitored facility that could handle the wastes for 50 to 100 years if the permanent dump is not completed on time.

Critics contend that the legislation does not address the 90 percent of all radioactive wastes generated by the military in its nuclear weapons programs.

Similar legislation was passed by the Senate earlier this year.

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