

Mars Inc. looks into truck mishap that spilled Skittles destined for cattle

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This June 1, 2016, file photo shows Skittles in New York City. AP Photo/Mark Lennihan

NEW YORK, N.Y. — The mysterious story of a Skittles spill on a rural highway in Wisconsin is taking a new twist. Mars Inc., the company that manufactures the candy, says it doesn't know why the discarded Skittles might have been headed to become cattle feed.

The case began when a Wisconsin sheriff posted on Facebook this week that "hundreds of thousands of Skittles" had been found spilled on a highway. Later, he updated the post to say the candy had fallen off a truck on its way to become cattle feed.

Taste The Beef

Dodge County Sheriff Dale Schmidt joked that it would be difficult to "Taste the Rainbow," as only red Skittles had spilled out. The incident gained attention after CNN wrote about it, citing a report from a local news station.

A variety of food byproducts are commonly used for animal feed. Mars says it has procedures for discarding foods, including Skittles, for that purpose. However, the company says the Skittles in question came from a factory that doesn't sell unused products for feed.

"We don't know how it ended up as it did and we are investigating," Mars said.

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The Case Of The Missing Letter "S"

Schmidt said one of his deputies came across the spill and sent him photos, which he posted on Facebook. He said the Skittles spilled from a box that started to break apart in the rain, and about half of them got out. The Skittles on the ground did not have the standard letter "S" on them, he said.

The sheriff said he spoke with the farmer, but declined to immediately give the farmer's name. He did not respond when asked by email how the office connected the Skittles with the farmer.

Mars spokeswoman Denise Young said the Skittles were supposed to be destroyed because a power outage prevented the signature "S" from being placed on the candies. She said Mars planned to contact the sheriff's office and the farmer to find out more.

FDA-Approved Cattle Feed

Linda Kurtz, a corporate environmental manager at Mars, said the company sells unused candies and ingredients to processors. The processors combine them with other materials to make animal feed. She said Mars does not sell directly to farmers, and its procedures follow Food and Drug Administration regulations.

Kurtz said Mars determined the spilled Skittles came from its plant in Yorkville, Illinois, which does not sell products for animal feed. The other U.S. plant that makes Skittles, in Waco, Texas, sells to a local processor that melts them down into syrup.

Josh Cribbs is a cattle nutritionist and director of commercial development for the American Maine-Anjou Association, which promotes a particular cattle breed. He said that the food byproducts that get used for cattle feed vary depending on what's available in the region and the particular time of year.

The byproducts are mixed with other ingredients to achieve a particular nutritional profile, Cribbs said.

"You might think, 'Oh my gosh, they might be eating a Skittle.' In reality, that piece of candy is being broken down," he said.