

Complaint

123 F.T.C.

IN THE MATTER OF

AMERIFIT, INC.

CONSENT ORDER, ETC., IN REGARD TO ALLEGED VIOLATION OF
SECS. 5 AND 12 OF THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ACT

Docket C-3747. Complaint, June 16, 1997--Decision, June 16, 1997

This consent order requires, among other things, the Connecticut-based marketer of diet supplements to pay \$100,000 for disgorgement, and prohibits the use of the name "Fat Burners" unless it is part of the trade name, "Fat Burners Diet, Exercise and Supplement System," and that the material containing the name includes the specified disclosure statements clearly and prominently. The consent order also requires the respondent to possess scientific substantiation for any claim that a food, drug or dietary supplement will cause weight loss or reduce body fat.

Appearances

For the Commission: *Jeffrey Feinstein.*

For the respondent: *Nancy Buc and Phillip Katz, Buc & Bearsdley, Washington, D.C.*

COMPLAINT

The Federal Trade Commission, having reason to believe that AmeriFIT, Inc., a corporation ("respondent"), has violated the provisions of the Federal Trade Commission Act, and it appearing to the Commission that this proceeding is in the public interest, alleges:

1. Respondent AmeriFIT, Inc., is a Delaware corporation with its principal office or place of business at 166 Highland Park Drive, Bloomfield, Connecticut.

2. Respondent has manufactured, advertised, labeled, offered for sale, sold and distributed products to the public, including "Fat Burners," "Fast Burners," "Improved Formula Fat Burners," and "Extra Strength Fat Burners" (collectively, "the Fat Burners products"). These products are "foods" and/or "drugs" within the meaning of Sections 12 and 15 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

3. The acts and practices of respondent alleged in this complaint have been in or affecting commerce, as "commerce" is defined in Section 4 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

4. Respondent has disseminated or has caused to be disseminated advertisements and promotional materials for the products referred to

in paragraph two, including but not necessarily limited to the attached Exhibits A and B. These advertisements and promotional materials contain the following statements:

A. "WHEN IT COMES TO WEIGHT LOSS THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT! FAT BURNERS™ is a 100% natural lipotropic formula designed to help people from every walk of life achieve the physique they desire. Fat that once created personal unhappiness and posed a hazard to one's health can now be utilized to one's advantage. FAT BURNERS™ may help active individuals lose weight and increase vascularity by increasing the body's ability to burn fat for energy. . . . 100% NATURAL WEIGHT LOSS SYSTEM." (Exhibit A).

B. "LOSE WEIGHT NOW! . . . introducing FAT BURNERS, America's choice for nutritional weight loss support. If your goal is a thinner, more attractive body, then let FAT BURNERS lead the way." (Exhibit B).

5. Through the means described in paragraph four, and through the use of the trade names "Fat Burners" and "Fast Burners," respondent has represented, expressly or by implication, that the Fat Burners products cause weight loss or reduce body fat.

6. Through the means described in paragraph four, and through the use of the trade names "Fat Burners" and "Fast Burners," respondent has represented, expressly or by implication, that it possessed and relied upon a reasonable basis that substantiated the representations set forth in paragraph five at the time the representations were made.

7. In truth and in fact, respondent did not possess and rely upon a reasonable basis that substantiated the representations set forth in paragraph five at the time the representations were made. Therefore, the representation set forth in paragraph six was, and is, false or misleading.

8. The acts and practices of respondent as alleged in this complaint constitute unfair or deceptive acts or practices and the making of false advertisements in or affecting commerce in violation of Sections 5(a) and 12 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

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EXHIBIT A



EXHIBIT A

1454

EXHIBIT B

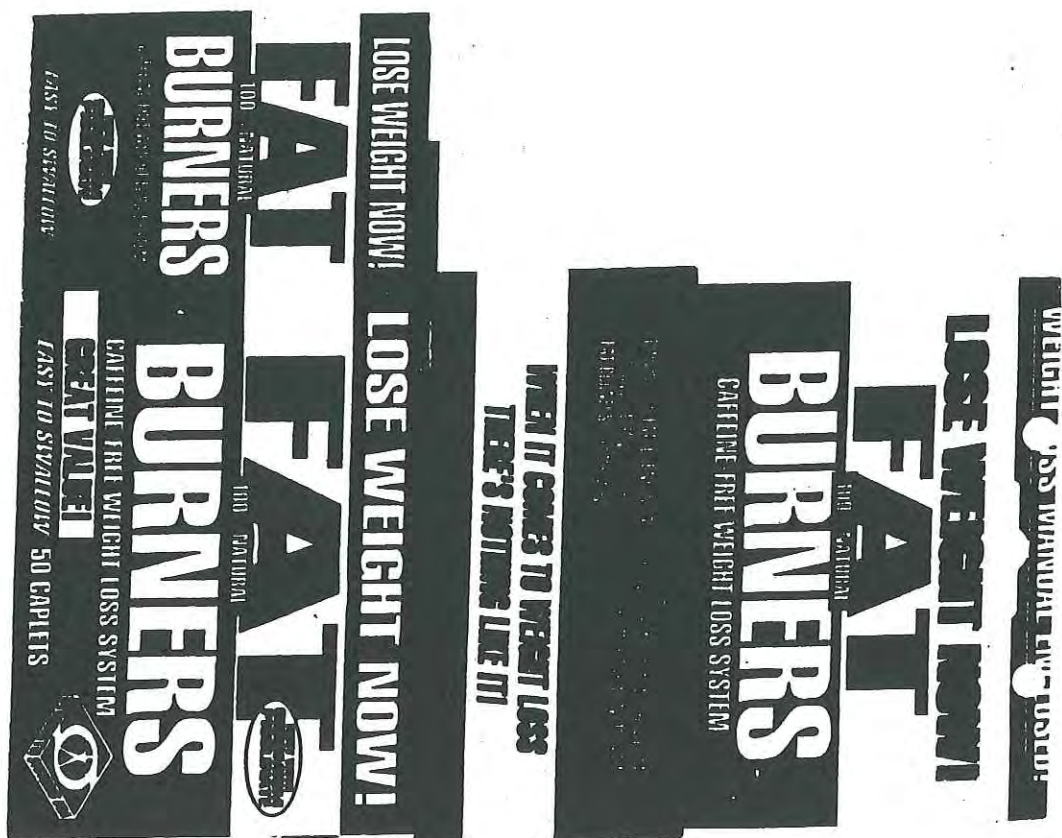


EXHIBIT B

DECISION AND ORDER

The Federal Trade Commission having initiated an investigation of certain acts and practices of respondent named in the caption hereof, and respondent having been furnished thereafter with a copy of a draft complaint which the Bureau of Consumer Protection proposed to present to the Commission for its consideration and which, if issued by the Commission, would charge respondent with violation of the Federal Trade Commission Act; and

Respondent, its attorneys, and counsel for the Commission having thereafter executed an agreement containing a consent order, an admission by respondent of all the jurisdictional facts set forth in the aforesaid draft of complaint, a statement that the signing of the agreement is for settlement purposes only and does not constitute an admission by respondent that the law has been violated as alleged in such complaint, or that the facts as alleged in such complaint, other than jurisdictional facts, are true, and waivers and other provisions as required by the Commission's Rules; and

The Commission having thereafter considered the matter and determined that it had reason to believe that respondent has violated the said Act, and that a complaint should issue stating its charges in that respect, and having thereupon accepted the executed consent agreement and placed such agreement on the public record for a period of sixty (60) days, now in further conformity with the procedure described in Section 2.34 of its Rules, the Commission hereby issues its complaint, makes the following jurisdictional findings and enters the following order:

1. Respondent AmeriFIT, Inc., is a Delaware corporation with its principal office or place of business at 166 Highland Park Drive, Bloomfield, Connecticut.

2. The Federal Trade Commission has jurisdiction of the subject matter of this proceeding and of respondent, and the proceeding is in the public interest.

ORDER

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this order, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "*Competent and reliable scientific evidence*" shall mean tests, analyses, research, studies, or other evidence based on the expertise of professionals in the relevant area that has been conducted and evaluated in an objective manner by persons qualified to do so, using procedures generally accepted by others in the profession to yield accurate and reliable results.

2. Unless otherwise specified, "*respondent*" shall mean AmeriFIT, Inc., a corporation, its successors and assigns, and its officers, agents, representatives and employees.

3. "*In or affecting commerce*" shall mean as defined in Section 4 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. 44.

4. "*The Fat Burners products*" shall mean products using the terms "fat burners" and "fast burners" in their trade names, including but not limited to, Fat Burners, Fast Burners, Improved Formula Fat Burners, and Extra Strength Fat Burners.

I.

It is ordered, That respondent, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the manufacturing, labeling, advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale, or distribution of the Fat Burners products or any other food, drug, or dietary supplement, as "food" and "drug" are defined in Section 15 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, in or affecting commerce, shall not make any representation, in any manner, expressly or by implication:

A. That such product can or will cause weight loss; or

B. That such product can or will reduce body fat,

unless, at the time the representation is made, respondent possesses and relies upon competent and reliable scientific evidence that substantiates the representation.

II.

It is further ordered, That respondent, directly or though any partnership, corporation, subsidiary, division or other device, in connection with the manufacturing, labeling, advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale or distribution of Fat Burners or any substantially similar product in or affecting commerce, as

"commerce" is defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act, do forthwith cease and desist from employing the name "Fat Burners" or any other name that communicates the same or similar meaning for such product; provided, however, that nothing in this order shall prevent the use of the name "Fat Burners Diet, Exercise, and Supplement System" if the material containing the name clearly and prominently contains the following disclosure:

"THE DIETARY SUPPLEMENT IN THIS SYSTEM IS FOR NUTRITIONAL USE ONLY AND DOES NOT CONTRIBUTE TO WEIGHT LOSS OR LOSS OF BODY FAT."

For purposes of this order, "clearly and prominently" shall mean as follows:

A. In a television or video advertisement less than fifteen (15) minutes in length, the disclosure shall be presented simultaneously in both the audio and visual portions of the advertisement, accompanying the first presentation of the name. When the first presentation of the name appears in the audio portion of the advertisement, the disclosure shall immediately follow the name. When the first presentation of the name appears in the visual portion of the advertisement, the disclosure shall appear immediately adjacent to the name. The audio disclosure shall be delivered in a volume and cadence sufficient for an ordinary consumer to hear and comprehend it. The video disclosure shall be of such a size and shade, and shall appear on the screen for a duration, sufficient for an ordinary consumer to read and comprehend it;

B. In a video advertisement fifteen (15) minutes in length or longer, the disclosure shall be presented simultaneously in both the audio and visual portions of the advertisement, accompanying the first presentation of the name and immediately before each presentation of ordering instructions for the product. When the name that triggers the disclosure appears in the visual portion of the advertisement, the disclosure shall appear immediately adjacent to the name. The audio disclosure shall be delivered in a volume and cadence sufficient for an ordinary consumer to hear and comprehend it. The video disclosure shall be of a size and shade, and shall appear on the screen for a duration, sufficient for an ordinary consumer to read and comprehend it. Provided that, for the purposes of this provision, the oral or visual presentation of a telephone number or

address for viewers to contact to place an order for the product in conjunction with the name shall be deemed a presentation of ordering instructions so as to require the presentation of the disclosure provided herein;

C. In a radio advertisement, the disclosure shall immediately follow the first presentation of the name and shall be delivered in a volume and cadence sufficient for an ordinary consumer to hear and comprehend it;

D. In a print advertisement, the disclosure shall be in close proximity to the largest presentation of the name, in a prominent type thickness and in a type size no smaller than twelve (12) point type. The disclosure shall be of a color or shade that readily contrasts with the background of the advertisement; and

E. On a product label, the disclosure shall be on the front panel of the label in immediate proximity to the largest presentation of the name, in a prominent type thickness and in a type size no smaller than twelve (12) point type. The disclosure shall be of a color or shade that readily contrasts with the background of the label.

Nothing contrary to, inconsistent with, or in mitigation of the above-required language shall be used in any advertising or labeling.

III.

It is further ordered, That respondent shall pay to the Federal Trade Commission, by cashier's check or certified check made payable to the Federal Trade Commission and delivered to the Associate Director, Division of Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C., the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). Respondent shall make this payment on or before the thirtieth day following the date of issuance of this order. In the event of any default of any obligation to make payment under this section, interest, computed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 1961(a), shall accrue from the date of default to the date of payment.

IV.

Nothing in this order shall prohibit respondent from making any representation for any drug that is permitted in labeling for such drug under any tentative final or final standard promulgated by the Food

and Drug Administration, or under any new drug application approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

V.

Nothing in this order shall prohibit respondent from making any representation for any product that is specifically permitted in labeling for such product by regulations promulgated by the Food and Drug Administration pursuant to the Nutritional Labeling and Education Act of 1990.

VI.

It is further ordered, That respondent shall, for five (5) years after the last date of dissemination of any representation covered by this order, maintain and upon request make available to the Federal Trade Commission for inspection and copying:

A. All advertisements, labeling, and promotional materials containing the representation;

B. All materials that were relied upon in disseminating the representation; and

C. All tests, reports, studies, surveys, demonstrations, or other evidence in their possession or control that contradict, qualify, or call into question the representation, or the basis relied upon for the representation, including complaints and other communications with consumers or with governmental or consumer protection organizations.

VII.

It is further ordered, That, for a period of five years commencing with the date of issuance of this order, respondent shall deliver a copy of this order to all current and future principals, officers, directors, and managers, and to all current and future employees, agents, and representatives having responsibilities with respect to the subject matter of this order, and shall secure from each such person a signed and dated statement acknowledging receipt of this order. Respondent shall deliver this order to current personnel within thirty (30) days after the date of service of this order, and to future personnel within thirty (30) days after the person assumes such position or responsibilities.

VIII.

It is further ordered, That respondent shall notify the Commission at least thirty (30) days prior to any change in the corporation that may affect compliance obligations arising under this order, including but not limited to a dissolution, assignment, sale, merger, or other action that would result in the emergence of a successor corporation; the creation or dissolution of a subsidiary, parent, or affiliate that engages in any acts or practices subject to this order; the proposed filing of a bankruptcy petition; or a change in the corporate name or address. Provided, however, that, with respect to any proposed change in the corporation about which respondent learns less than thirty (30) days prior to the date such action is to take place, respondent shall notify the Commission as soon as is practicable after obtaining such knowledge. All notices required by this Part shall be sent by certified mail to the Associate Director, Division of Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C.

IX.

It is further ordered, That respondent shall, within sixty (60) days after the date of service of this order, and at such other times as the Federal Trade Commission may require, file with the Commission a report, in writing, setting forth in detail the manner and form in which it has complied with this order.

X.

This order will terminate on June 16, 2017, or twenty years from the most recent date that the United States or the Federal Trade Commission files a complaint (with or without an accompanying consent decree) in federal court alleging any violation of the order, whichever comes later; provided, however, that the filing of such a complaint will not affect the duration of:

- A. Any Part in this order that terminates in less than twenty (20) years;
- B. This order's application to any respondent that is not named as a defendant in such complaint; and

C. This order if such complaint is filed after the order has terminated pursuant to this Part.

Provided, further, that if such complaint is dismissed or a federal court rules that the respondent did not violate any provision of the order, and the dismissal or ruling is either not appealed or upheld on appeal, then the order will terminate according to this Part as though the complaint had never been filed, except that the order will not terminate between the date such complaint is filed and the later of the deadline for appealing such dismissal or ruling and the date such dismissal or ruling is upheld on appeal.

IN THE MATTER OF

2943174 CANADA INC., ET AL.

CONSENT ORDER, ETC., IN REGARD TO ALLEGED VIOLATION OF
SECS. 5 AND 12 OF THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ACT*Docket C-3748. Complaint, June 16, 1997--Decision, June 16, 1997*

This consent order requires, among other things, the Canadian company and its officer to have scientific substantiation for claims that any product or program controls appetite, increases human metabolism, reduces body fat, causes weight loss, causes long-term or permanent weight loss, reduces cholesterol, or provides any weight-related benefit. The consent order also requires scientific substantiation for claims about the benefits or efficacy of any drug or device. Finally, the consent order prohibits misrepresentations about the existence or results of any test or study.

Appearances

For the Commission: *Ronald Waldman and Donald G. D'Amato.*

For the respondents: *Jeffrey S. Edelstein, Hall, Dickler, Kent, Friedman & Wood, New York, N.Y.*

COMPLAINT

The Federal Trade Commission, having reason to believe that 2943174 Canada Inc., a corporation, and Patrice Runner, individually and as an officer of the corporation ("respondents"), have violated the provisions of the Federal Trade Commission Act, and it appearing to the Commission that this proceeding is in the public interest, alleges:

1. Respondent 2943174 Canada Inc. is a Canadian corporation with its principal office or place of business at 1414 Place Bonaventure, Montreal, Quebec, H5A 1H3.

2. Respondent Patrice Runner is an officer of the corporate respondent. Individually or in concert with others, he formulates, directs, participates in, or controls the policies, acts, or practices of the corporation, including the acts or practices alleged in this complaint. His principal office or place of business is the same as that of 2943174 Canada Inc.

3. Respondents have advertised, offered for sale, sold, and distributed products to the public, including "Svelt-PATCH," a skin patch that purports to melt away body fat. The Svelt-PATCH is a "drug" or "device" within the meaning of Sections 12 and 15 of the