



# STATEMENT

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Release No. 0047.05

by  
**Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns**  
**February 9, 2005**

“On Dec. 29, 2004, USDA released a final rule that establishes criteria for geographic regions to be recognized as presenting minimal risk of introducing BSE into the United States. It places Canada in the minimal-risk category, and defines the requirements that must be met for the import of certain ruminants and ruminant products from Canada. A minimal-risk region can include a region in which BSE-infected animals have been diagnosed, but where sufficient risk-mitigation measures have been put in place to make the introduction of BSE into the United States unlikely.

“Our ongoing investigations into the recent finds of BSE in Canada in animals over 30 months are not complete. Therefore, I feel it is prudent to delay the effective date for allowing imports of meat from animals 30 months and over.

“This action also addresses concerns over the portion of the minimal-risk rule that would reopen the Canadian border for beef from animals 30 months and over, while keeping it closed for imports of older live cattle for processing in the United States. Some have suggested that this part of the rule does not reflect the evidence that beef from animals 30 months and over processed in Canada has the same risk profile as beef from Canadian animals 30 months and over processed in the United States.

“At the same time, I am asking U.S. officials to move forward in consideration and development of a plan to allow imports of animals 30 months and older for slaughter as well as beef from over 30-month animals as the next step in resuming full trade with Canada. As always, decisions will be made based on the latest scientific information and with the protection of public and animal health the highest priority.

“We remain very confident that the combination of the rule’s requirements, in addition to the animal and public health measures that Canada has in place to prevent the spread of BSE, along with the extensive U.S. regulatory food-safety and animal-health systems, provide the protection to U.S. consumers and livestock. The removal of Specified Risk Materials is the most effective barrier to protect consumers, and therefore the rest of the rule will proceed as announced.”

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