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October 6, 2007

Members of Congress
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Please Co-sponsor and Support S.J. Res. 20 and H.J. Res. 55

Dear U.S. Senator,

R-CALF USA represents U.S. farmers and ranchers who earn all, or part, of their living raising and selling live cattle. We are committed to ensuring the highest quality and safest beef for U.S. consumers. We need your help.

On Nov. 19, 2007, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to implement a new rule, known as the OTM Rule, which will allow Canadian cattle over 30 months (OTM) of age into the U.S., as well as beef and blood from these OTM cattle. However, Canada continues to have an ongoing problem with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, also known as mad cow disease).

Members of Congress introduced Resolutions of Disapproval to negate the OTM Rule on Oct. 3 (S.J. Res. 20 and H.J. Res. 55). R-CALF USA respectfully asks you to help protect the U.S. cattle herd and U.S. consumers by both co-sponsoring and voting "Yes" on either S.J. Res. 20 or H.J. Res. 55, whichever is appropriate.

The OTM Rule would allow Canadian cattle born after March 1, 1999, into the United States, and beef and blood from Canadian cattle of *any age* would be allowed as well. It is important to note that five of the seven new cases of BSE detected in Canada since the beginning of last year were found in animals born well after this 1999 date.

USDA's risk model predicts the OTM Rule would result in the introduction of 19 BSE-infected cattle into our country, resulting in a secondary BSE infection of 2 U.S. cows. If less optimistic assumptions are inputted, the number of BSE-infected cattle expected to enter the U.S. jumps to over 100.

Other countries with BSE, principally European nations and Japan, practice far stricter mitigation measures than Canada. Specifically, they test older cattle before slaughter, they ban more tissues and blood from all animal feed, and they remove high-risk tissues from cattle at a much younger age to protect human health.

The international standard-setting body (OIE) criticized the U.S. feed ban for being inadequate to stop the spread of BSE. USDA is defying the OIE, claiming the U.S. does not need to improve its feed ban prior to allowing higher-risk Canadian cattle, beef, and blood into the United States. Contrary to USDA's claim that Canada's BSE-risk profile is similar to the U.S., the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that Canadian cattle are 26 times more likely to test positive for BSE than cattle born and raised in the United States.

Please co-sponsor and support the Resolutions of Disapproval against the OTM Rule, thereby enforcing Congress' mandate to prevent the introduction of BSE into the United States.

Sincerely,

R.M. Thornsberry, D.V.M.
President, R-CALF USA Board of Directors