

Fighting for the U.S. Cattle Producer!



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May 16, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: Request and Recommendation for an Immediate Response to Canada's 17th BSE-Positive Cow

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

The Canadian cow diagnosed on May 15, 2009 with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is Canada's 17th BSE case detected in a Canadian-born cow (Canada does not count the Canadian-born cow detected in the state of Washington, nor does it count the BSE-infected cow imported from Great Britain and detected with BSE in 1993, as among its country's BSE cases and, therefore, considers this only its 16th case). Importantly, this is the first confirmed BSE case in an animal eligible for importation into the United States under your Administration. However this case is actually the 10th BSE-positive cow born after March 1, 1999, the date your agency established in its Sept. 18, 2007 final rule (commonly known as the over-30-month (OTM) rule) as the date-of-birth after which Canadian-born cattle are eligible for importation into the United States. This determination was based on the previous Administration's belief that Canada's ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban, first implemented in 1997, was thereafter effective at preventing the spread of BSE in Canada.

The previous Administration was irrefutably wrong as now the majority of all BSE-infected cattle detected in Canadian-born cattle have contracted BSE *after* the date the previous Administration believed the BSE agent was no longer circulating in Canada's ruminant feed system. We believe this latest of 10 post-1999 BSE cases, this one born approximately three years after March 1, 1999, not only annihilates *any* effectiveness the previous Administration attributed to its foundational mitigation measure embodied in the OTM rule – the March 1, 1999 birth-date restriction – but also, it necessitates decisive action by your Administration to protect the U.S. cattle herd and U.S. consumers from the introduction into and dissemination within the United States of BSE from Canada.

The risk of introducing BSE into the United States from OTM Canadian cattle is both heightened and compounded by the significant numbers of birth and feed cohorts of known BSE-infected Canadian cattle that have entered, and are most likely continuing to enter, the United States under the OTM Rule. The United Kingdom's (UK's) BSE experience shows that birth and feed cohorts of BSE-infected cattle are of increased risk for BSE infection. Data provided by the

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UK show that only 35 percent of BSE-infected herds in the UK had only one case of BSE, while 49 percent of the BSE-infected herds had three or more BSE cases. The UK report showing the percentage of herds with one or more BSE cases is available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/vla/science/docs/sci_tse_stats_gen.pdf (at Page 14).

The investigations completed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) reveal that numerous OTM birth and feed cohorts of BSE-infected Canadian have entered the United States. For example:

- The July 31, 2008 CFIA report on a BSE-infected cow born in 2001 states that three of the 101 feed cohorts of the BSE-infected cow that left the Canadian farm of origin “were traced and confirmed to have been exported for slaughter and the importing country has been notified.” We presume these cattle were exported to, and slaughtered in, the United States. <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/bseesb/ab2008/12investe.shtml>
- The CFIA report concerning Canada’s 10th case of BSE (which the CFIA considers its 9th case), stated that one BSE cohort was confirmed to have been exported and the importing country was notified. This BSE case, and presumably all its birth and feed cohorts, was born in 2000. <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/bseesb/ab2007/9investe.shtml>
- The CFIA report concerning Canada’s 6th case of BSE (which the CFIA considers its 5th case) stated that 15 cohorts were exported to the United States. This BSE case, and presumably all its birth and feed cohorts, was born in 2000. <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/bseesb/bccb2006/5investe.shtml>
- The CFIA report concerning Canada’s 5th case of BSE (which the CFIA considers its 4th case) stated that 90 cohorts either died or were slaughtered at other locations. This BSE case, and presumably all its birth and feed cohorts, was born in 2000. <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/bseesb/ab2006/4investe.shtml>.

It is clear from the CFIA reports referenced above that the United States is importing live OTM cattle from Canada that were exposed to the same BSE-contaminated feed that was the presumed source of Canada’s BSE-positive cattle. Because these cohorts bear an inherently higher BSE risk, this is a disaster waiting to happen.

R-CALF USA implores you to immediately and decisively prohibit all imports of OTM cattle from Canada and to then send your own investigative team to Canada to determine what additional measures are necessary to mitigate the increased risk of BSE associated with Canada’s OTM cattle. Please call me anytime at 406-252-2516 if any additional information is needed.

Sincerely,



Bill Bullard
CEO