

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 29, 2007

The Honorable Mike Johanns  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns,

In light of the recent report of another Canadian cow infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), we are writing today to express deep concern with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) proposal to expand live cattle and beef trade with Canada (OTM Rule). USDA's proposed rule would permit the importation of live Canadian cattle born after March 1, 1999. We, and the cattle ranchers we represent, believe expanding imports of Canadian livestock and beef will have serious repercussions for the American cattle industry and we urge you to withdraw the proposal.

Given the discovery of Canada's eleventh case of BSE, it is becoming increasingly clear that Canada has not taken the necessary steps to protect its herd from the spread of BSE. Increasing U.S. imports of Canadian cattle and beef at this critical time would have significant negative impact on the economic well-being of American cattle producers, and could seriously disrupt our efforts to expand U.S. beef exports overseas.

Expanding Canadian cattle imports increases the possibility that a future case of BSE in a Canadian animal may be found in the United States. Five of Canada's BSE cases occurred in cattle born after the March 1, 1999 date proposed in the rule as an appropriate age for importation. There is a very real possibility that USDA's proposal would lead to the importation of additional BSE-infected animals from Canada, which would destroy years of hard work by the American cattle industry, the Administration, and Congress to restore the confidence of our trading partners in the safety of American beef.

Furthermore, we were deeply disappointed to read the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) resolution, which links the U.S. herd to Canada's by classifying both as "controlled" risk countries, despite the obvious disparity in the two countries' BSE management efforts and infection rate. Even more troubling than the OIE classification itself, however, was the USDA's abandonment of the American cattle producer in the face of the OIE's May 22 resolution. Rather than praise the classification – which creates the mistaken impression that no differences exist between the Canadian and American herds – the USDA ought to have challenged the OIE's assumptions on behalf of America's cattlemen.

The USDA could go a long way in restoring the confidence of cattlemen all across this country, not to mention our cattle and beef trading partners around the world, by withdrawing the OTM rule. Thank you for your timely attention to this important matter, and we look forward to your response.

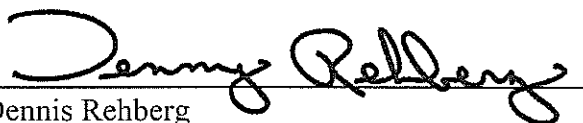
Sincerely,



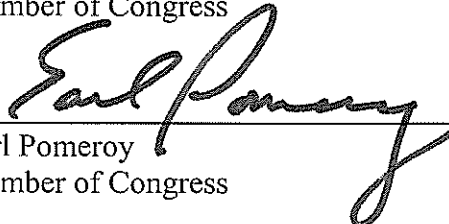
Barbara Cubin  
Member of Congress



Stephanie Herseth Sandlin  
Member of Congress



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Earl Pomeroy  
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*Heather Wilson*

Heather Wilson  
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Lynn Woolsey  
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