

Fighting for the U.S. Cattle Producer!



R-CALF
USA

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Bruce I. Knight
Under Secretary
Marketing and Regulatory Programs
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dr. Debra Donch
National Brucellosis Epidemiologist
National Center for Animal Health Programs, VS, APHIS
4700 River Road Unit 43
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231

Dear Under Secretary Knight and Dr. Donch,

The Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) shares your desire to strengthen our nation's resistance to livestock disease outbreaks. It is in our members' financial interests to assist your agency in achieving the highest possible level of livestock disease control and prevention.

The R-CALF USA Animal Health Committee and the R-CALF USA Animal Identification Committee again (see Nov. 10, 2006, letter to former Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns) requests that USDA keep brucellosis vaccination and surveillance programs in place across the U.S. and to pay for such activity by diverting funds from the agency's National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

R-CALF USA also requests USDA to implement and fund brucellosis surveillance in all other states where cattle are present, but no formal testing program is in place.

The Wyoming cattle that first tested positive for brucellosis recently were quickly and efficiently detected through a longstanding tradition of veterinary services at an auction barn – not because of a costly and burdensome 48-hour electronic traceback system. NAIS is not going to keep a cattle producer from losing his or her herd if those cattle get brucellosis, and NAIS will not reduce the need to test for brucellosis because the disease eventually will show up.

R-CALF USA believes it is critical to maintain testing at livestock auction barns because many of the cattle that go through the market system don't end up going to slaughter, but back to

someone's farm. If USDA doesn't test for it, how will a producer know they have it until it is too late?

We urge USDA to take the millions of dollars being spent on NAIS and utilize those funds to *prevent* the spread of diseases like brucellosis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. M. Thornsberry DVM".

R. M. Thornsberry, D.V.M.
Chair, R-CALF USA Animal Health Committee
President, R-CALF USA Board of Directors