



July 16, 2008

VOTE NO ON THE JOHNSON AMENDMENT

On behalf of the over 250,000 cattle producers represented by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and our state and breed affiliates, we urge you to vote NO on the Johnson amendment in regards to Argentina and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD).

While we believe that Senator Johnson has the best interests of the U.S. cattle industry in mind, we feel that his amendment does not take into account the trade issues our industry has faced over the past several years. Like Senator Johnson, NCBA feels that further opening of the beef trade with Argentina will put our industry at risk to FMD, the one disease feared most by cattle producers.

However, this amendment is not the answer. First and foremost, NCBA cannot accept the provision of having the Secretary of Agriculture report to Congress on the status of the disease in Argentina. This is precedent setting when it comes to trade. As you know, the U.S. cattle industry has been trying for years to get our beef back into markets that were closed to us due to the December 23, 2003 case of BSE in Washington State. If the Korean legislative body had a requirement similar to Senator Johnson's, it is doubtful we would have the beef flowing back to Korea that we do today. We need to treat our trading partners the way we ask them to treat us.

Rather than passing this amendment, the Senate Appropriations Committee should send a signal to USDA that they must do an updated and thorough risk analysis before they move forward with the rule. Only after the new risk assessment is done, and it demonstrates that livestock or their products can be safely imported from Patagonia South in Argentina, should USDA even consider moving forward.

Senator Johnson is right in that FMD poses a huge risk to cattle producers across this country and that expanded trade with Argentina should not yet take place. However, we cannot give our trading partners whose markets still remain closed to U.S. beef anymore ammunition to keep us out. NCBA is concerned that the Johnson amendment is just that ammunition that takes trade decisions and puts them in the hands of the legislative bodies rather than having them based on sound science.

Vote NO on the Johnson amendment to truly protect the U.S. cattle business.