

*Fighting for the U.S. Cattle Producer!*



**R-CALF**  
*USA*

**R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America**  
P.O. Box 30715  
Billings, MT 59107  
Fax: 406-252-3176  
Phone: 406-252-2516  
Website: [www.r-calfusa.com](http://www.r-calfusa.com)  
E-mail: [r-calfusa@r-calfusa.com](mailto:r-calfusa@r-calfusa.com)

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February 5, 2010

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

**Sent via facsimile and U.S. Mail: 202-720-6314**

**Re: Decision to Revise USDA's Animal Disease Traceability Policy**

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of its thousands of cattle-producing members and numerous state cattle association affiliates, thank you for your decision to revise your agency's prior policy regarding animal disease traceability. We interpret your decision as one that brings an end to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) National Animal Identification System (NAIS), and we are grateful. Your decision reflects a genuine effort on the part of USDA to both consider and accommodate the interests of independent U.S. farmers and ranchers who raise and sell cattle.

The new approach you described for animal traceability appears workable for independent cattle producers and more compatible with current cattle industry practices. Specifically, we support your exclusive focus on animal disease traceability, the vesting of control into the hands of states and tribes, the limiting of USDA's role to cattle in interstate commerce, the commitment to evaluate preexisting systems and encourage low-cost technologies, and your commitment to include producers in the process of building your framework. In addition, we are encouraged by your statement regarding a need to strengthen our nation's import controls to prevent the introduction of diseases from foreign sources.

R-CALF USA pledges to assist you in your effort to improve animal disease traceability within the framework you have announced. To accomplish this, we would like to participate directly on your Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health that will advise USDA and help build upon your framework for animal disease traceability. We will soon provide to you names of individuals whom we think would best represent the interests of our nation's cattle farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for your receptiveness to the interests of U.S. cattle farmers and ranchers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'R. M. Thornsberry D.V.M.' with a stylized flourish at the end.

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