



September 20, 2007

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the farming and ranching members of the National Farmers Union, we write to express our strong opposition to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final rule to expand cattle and beef trade with minimal risk regions. We urge the United States House of Representatives to take action to rescind USDA's final rule during the 60-day congressional review period.

The September 18, 2007 Federal Register published a final rule to amend regulations regarding the importation of animals and animal products. The rule aims to establish conditions for the importation of certain commodities from regions that present a minimal risk of introducing bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) into the United States. Thirty days after the original publication of the proposed rule in January 2007, Canada's ninth BSE-positive case was discovered. The animal was born well after USDA's proposed March 1, 1999 age limit. Until Canada can demonstrate its BSE problem is under control, NFU contends it is premature to expand beef and cattle trade.

National Farmers Union believes American producers and consumers deserve better. The following measures should be addressed prior to expanding beef and cattle trade with Canada:

- Canada can prove and verify their cattle herd and beef products are BSE-free;
- Canada can prove and verify 100 percent compliance with the ruminant feed ban;
- U.S. international beef export markets are firmly reestablished;
- Mandatory country-of-origin labeling is fully implemented;
- Rapid-test technology is provided to all domestic slaughtering facilities to provide stability to the cattle market, and another layer of confidence for the American consuming public; and
- A guaranteed economic safety net is established for American producers if the importation of cattle and beef products from BSE-positive countries negatively impacts domestic profitability.

Again, our members maintain that it is inappropriate to proceed with the rule and urge you to take immediate action to prevent its implementation. We look forward to working with you to ensure the interests of American cattle producers and consumers are protected.

Sincerely,

National Farmers Union Board of Directors