



Consumer Federation of America



March 14, 2005

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

We write to encourage you to co-sponsor House Joint Resolution 23, introduced by Representatives Herseth (D-SD) and Cubin (R-WY). This resolution would provide for Congressional disapproval of the rule issued by the Department of Agriculture relating to the establishment of minimal-risk regions for the introduction of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) into the United States.

Since 1989, U.S. policy has been set to only allow imports from countries that are considered “BSE- free.” This policy has served the United States well; it is one of the primary reasons there has been no indigenous case of BSE in the United States.

Now, however, the Department of Agriculture wants to open the border to Canadian cattle and cattle products under 30 months of age with a rule that is decidedly less stringent than the international standards put forth by the International Office of Epizootics (OIE). USDA is proposing to establish Canada as a “minimal risk region” without adhering to the strict requirements that the OIE establishes for that minimal risk designation. Measures in which Canada has not yet achieved complete compliance include specific timeframes for the enforcement of a feed ban, the mandatory reporting of cattle displaying signs of BSE and an established surveillance plan.

Questions also remain as to whether Canada is properly enforcing its feed ban rule. This concern was heightened last month when a Canadian cow, born several months after the 1997 feed ban implementation, was confirmed with mad cow disease. *The Vancouver Sun* also recently found animal proteins in “vegetarian” feed samples, a violation of Canada’s feed regulations, in more than half of 70 feed samples it investigated. Our own Food and Drug Administration has issued import alerts concerning the presence of animal tissue in vegetarian feed products coming out of Canada.

Given the flaws in the agency’s justification for this new rule and the inadequate enforcement of Canada’s regulations on BSE, it is irresponsible to allow the import of live cattle or beef products from Canada or other countries with known cases of mad cow disease.

Representative Herseth's resolution is crucial because importation should not resume until Canada has a better handle on the scope of its mad cow disease problem, has achieved and documented full compliance with its feed rules, and the United States is confident that safeguards are in place to protect against the disease.

We urge you to co-sponsor H.J. Resolution 23. Please contact Ryan Stroschein in Rep. Herseth's office at (202) 225-2801 or Allison McGuire in Rep. Cubin's office at (202) 225-2311 to cosponsor H.J. Resolution 23. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carol Tucker Foreman
Director, Food Policy Institute
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Joan Claybrook
President
Public Citizen