

October 1, 2001

FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket #00-036A
Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Room 102 Cotton Annex Building
300 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

01 OCT - 5 PM 9:35

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00-036A 00-036A-282 James H. Myers
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in response to the proposed rulemaking regarding the definition and labeling of U.S. cattle and beef products.

As a veterinarian practicing in South Dakota in a predominantly cow/calf practice, a livestock producer, and a consumer I strongly support the definition of U.S. cattle and beef products for labeling purposes as "born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States." All other definitions mislead consumers and damage the integrity of the U.S. beef industry.

In light of recent events including the diagnosis of BSE in Japan from which the U.S. has imported beef products and the recent terrorist action in which they could easily use imported meat as a source of biological warfare, I would **strongly** support the right of the consumer to have options. They should be able to choose beef that they are confident is raised under the strictest health standards, slaughtered under the most sanitary procedures in the world, and processed with the most refined equipment available.... OVER not knowing any of the conditions under which the food they have purchased was handled.

It seems ridiculous to me that a consumer can by looking at the tag on his underwear determine where the product was made and yet, when he is purchasing food for his family cannot determine what facilities or whose hands or under what regulations his food was handled. The U.S. has stringent restrictions on our cattle industry as to what compounds can be fed to, injected into, or in any other way administered to our cattle for the safety of our consumer. We have no way of knowing if imported beef has or has not been handled under these conditions. Therefore, the consumer should have the right to choose a product they know is free of infectious, toxic or carcinogenic compounds. At this time (especially with ground beef) consumers are consuming meat that they have no way of identifying its origin, its contents or its safety.

In the past we have had contamination of ground beef with E. coli. A large amount of the commercially available ground beef is blended using good quality American beef and poor quality imported beef as a way to cheapen up the end product. It has been impossible to trace the source of the contamination with E. coli because of the varying origins of these ingredients. With country or origin labeling, E. coli breaks in my opinion

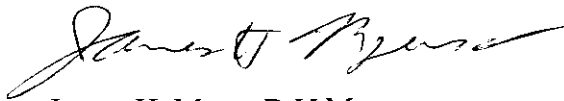
would be less likely; but if they did occur, they would be traceable. And, again the consumer has the right to choose either all US ground beef or that blended with imports.

I strongly support a mandatory labeling program with a uniform, consistent definition for domestic origin as born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the United States.

I oppose the petition submitted in September 2000, that would allow imported beef products to be fed in the U.S. for 100 days, processed in the United States and would receive a country of origin label, "Beef" Made in the U.S.A."

It is my hope that FSIS will implement meaningful labeling regulations for cattle and beef products. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James H. Myers".

James H. Myers D.V.M.
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