

SHERWIN DENT

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February 20, 2004

To F.S.I.S

The BSE issue has turned into a animal and consumer rights issue, more than a health issue. Having attended a state forum for BSE and listening to the comments on the news by our top FSIS authorities , I have come to the conclusion that this is more than a health driven issue. I am all for food safety and continuing to address BSE as the threat that it is. However, the extreme measures taken this far has done more to hurt the image of meat food safety than it has helped. We have the general public thinking that every down cow we have processed in the past had BSE . Now the FSIS has tied the hands of their own veterinarian inspectors to the point of which they won't let them make a determination on the difference between a old down animal and a healthy but crippled animal. What purpose does it serve even for the animal rights groups, to not be allowed to harvest a healthy animal that is injured and needs to be put out of it's misery. As a small processor, harvesting downed animals is not a profit issue. It is a service to our customers and even the animals. I suggest you let inspection do it's job and make preliminary tests on suspect animals to insure there is not a chance of BSE . It serves no purpose for anyone if these suspect animals lay around to die , and are disposed of in uncontrolled manners.

The rules you have put in place at this time, has done nothing more than encourage boot leg processors and home kill that has no inspection and the meat will still be in the food chain. The plants that go to the effort to process under USDA inspection have had their hands tied with what they can do, even under custom processing , and now with the regulations imposed on us , the custom processing customers are finding other avenues to have their processing done. When they move to an exempt plant or state plant that is not being monitored, that customer usually ends up taking all of their business there, because they are usually cheaper from the fact that they are not having to jump through all of the hoops and paper work that a USDA plant does. FSIS should educate the public with the FACTS not over react under the pressure of consumer and animal activists. I personally belong to animal rights groups because I think animals are miss treated in many instances and they need someone to stand up for them. However, no one person has been realistic about the chances of the public being infected by BSE, or do they want to make a stand , because with everything there is a risk.

**BOTTOM LINE; BSE IS NOT A DOWN COW ISSUE. A COW THAT IS DOWN DOES NOT MAKE IT HAVE BSE. A COW THAT IS AMBLATORY DOES NOT MEAN IT DOESN'T HAVE BSE.**

Sincerely, Sherwin Dent (owner Special D Meats Inc)

Signature *Sherwin Dent*