

FSIS Docket Clerk  
Docket 03-0251F, Room 102  
Cotton Annex  
300 12<sup>th</sup> and C Street S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250-3700

452

RECEIVED  
FSIS DOCKET ROOM  
March 9, 2004  
04 MAR 15 PM 12:18

To Whom It May Concern:

Regarding the Downer Rule

I would like to request that farmers be allowed to have a local locker pick up an animal that is down because of injury.

We have had two occasions on our farm where an animal has broken it's leg while out on pasture. The first case involved a yearling bull that had been out with the cow herd for only seven days. When we noticed that he had a broken leg, the local locker came and got him and we were able to salvage this animal for meat for our family. We also had to go out and purchase a replacement animal, which would have been an even greater financial strain on our family had we not been able to butcher the bull with the broken leg. Even though we had meat to eat for our family, it turned out to be very expensive meat as that bull was worth substantially more money than a steer would have been.

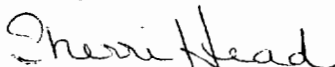
The second incident was a heifer who had calved two days previously, we turned her out into the pasture and some how she suffered a broken leg. We called the local locker and they came out and butchered her for us, which provided beef for our family. We would never feed meat to our family that we didn't consider safe. Give us some credit.....

In neither of these instances were we concerned that these animals would not provide a safe and nutritious source of meat for ourselves and our young children. Please take into consideration that there are many times when an animal is perfectly safe for human consumption but not able to walk. I think that farmers have enough knowledge to decide for themselves whether they want to eat a down animal or not. I would have to say that most farmers would be more cautious than would be a meat packer. We would never take an unnecessary risk with something so important.

I know that our local locker would take all circumstances into consideration, if they felt an animal should not be used for human consumption, they would be the first ones to advise as such.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Sherri Head  
Head's Red Angus Farm  
1209 L. Avenue  
Marengo, IA 52301-8737