

April 6, 2004

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FSIS Docket Clerk  
Docket 03-025IF  
Room 102, Cotton Annex  
300 12<sup>th</sup> and C Street SW  
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Gentlemen:

Now that the occurrence of mad cow disease in the U.S. has brought to the attention, not only of legislators and the USDA, but also consumers, the fact that, for decades, we have been forcing the American people to eat meat that I would hesitate to feed to my dog, it is time to change our ways.

I have been a farmer and rancher most of my life, and I can assure you that I have seen it as it is. You could not pay me enough money to eat the animals that I see my neighbors shipping to the "downer plant". In my years of raising cattle, I have had "downers" -- though not many (you won't, if you take proper care of your animals) -- and not one of them has gone to slaughter. I would not eat such an animal, and I would not ask anyone else to do so. My sick or injured animals have always been humanely destroyed and the carcass buried or burned.

And I am not yet on welfare because of this practice. Many in the industry are claiming that humane destruction and proper disposal of sick or wounded animals will cause a hardship for ranchers. That is ridiculous!! If the cattle industry in this country will be adversely affected by the loss of approximately \$25 per sick animal, which is about the average net profit from a "downer", then it is in very, very deep trouble.

I strongly urge that the present ban on "downers" in the food chain be both strengthened and expanded to include all species of food animals -- not just cattle. Not only is it disgusting to think of ingesting the product, but it is profane to promote and prolong the suffering of a sick animal, just for a few dollars. To stop the cruel practice of dragging, pushing, or otherwise transporting these animals to the killing floor, and instead to require the humane euthanization of such animals if they become injured or ill before reaching that point, is the only decent thing to do.

Thank you for considering my point of view.

Sincerely,



Mona M. Lasater  
4723 FM 3418  
Breckenridge, TX 76424