

**COMMENTS OF
Elwood “Woody” Barth**

**STATE SECRETARY OF
North Dakota Farmers Union**

**ON THE
Proposed USDA rules for Importation of Canadian
Beef/Cattle**

**PRESENTED TO
Senate Subcommittee on Interstate Commerce, Trade
and Tourism
Member Senator Byron L. Dorgan**

**BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA
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Senator Byron Dorgan:

My name is Elwood “Woody” Barth. I am a livestock producer from Solen, North Dakota, and also serve as the state secretary of the North Dakota Farmers Union, the state’s largest general farm organization. Today I am here representing the members of North Dakota Farmers Union. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and for focusing on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed rules.

The USDA’s proposed rules that allow for liberalized importation of Canadian beef/cattle do not address the issues of safety for our nation’s producers. United States cattle producers continue to have no assurance that Canada has its BSE problem under control.

The rules will call for allowed importation of beef/cattle of all ages, including animals born after March 1, 1999. Live animals must have an ID plus a permanent tattoo that will allow Canadian officials to certify age of animals. These rules have no clarification as to what will happen if another BSE case is found as it relates to our trading partners, and no explanation of how USDA plans to separate Canadian beef from U.S. beef for export.

Just two weeks ago, Canada confirmed its ninth BSE-positive case. The recent animal was 6.5 years old, which falls within USDA’s proposed age limit to expand beef/cattle trade with Canada. Just recently, Canadian cattle entered the United States without government-required health papers or identification tags in Washington State. Because of these events, we believe American producers and consumers deserve better than what USDA is proposing.

North Dakota Farmers Union believes livestock health is critical to production agriculture and our nation’s ability to provide a safe food supply. We believe the following should be addressed prior to expanding beef/cattle trade with Canada:

- Canada can prove/verify their cattle herd and beef products are BSE-free;
- Canada can prove/verify 100% compliance with the ruminant feed ban;

- U.S. international beef export markets are firmly reestablished;
- Mandatory country of origin labeling is fully implemented;
- Increased level of surveillance, quarantine, inspection and testing at all U.S.-Canadian border locations;
- Impose similar guarantees concerning livestock feed production from all trading partners and require Canada to allow the U.S. to perform random investigations and testing of their production facilities as a condition of market access;
- Rapid-test technology is provided to all domestic slaughtering facilities to provide stability to the cattle market, and another layer of confidence for the American consuming public; and
- A guaranteed economic safety net for American producers if the importation of cattle and beef products from BSE-positive countries negatively impacts domestic profitability.

In the interest of U.S. producers and consumers, USDA should withdraw the proposed rule to expand Canadian beef and cattle imports. The department should also move to immediately implement mandatory country of origin labeling which would allow consumers to make an informed choice of where their food comes from.