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The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Madame Secretary:

The announcement yesterday that a case of mad cow disease has been identified in Canada dating back to an animal death in January causes me great concern.

I support your immediate suspension of Canadian beef imports into the U.S. marketplace and I support your call for an investigation of what has happened in Canada.

Specifically, I hope you will report to Congress on why a case of mad cow disease existed in January and we did not learn about it until May. It appears to me one of two things has happened. First, it took four months for the Canadians to get a diagnosis that this cow had been infected with mad cow disease. If that's the case there is something dreadfully wrong. The response to discovering a case of mad cow disease has to be immediate and decisive. We can't wait one third of a year for a pathology report. That's absurd. That approach would put our entire beef industry at risk.

The second explanation would be the Canadians had the information prior to this time but waited to announce it publicly. If that is the case it would be a devastating breach of faith, undermine consumer confidence and potentially undermine our beef industry.

Our ranchers and our beef industry have a lot at stake in protecting our supply of beef from mad cow disease. We have to move quickly to find out what happened and make certain we have taken all the necessary steps to protect our beef industry here in the U.S. We can only accomplish that if we can take timely and decisive action.

Once again, I do not understand how a cow infected with mad cow disease could be slaughtered in January in Canada and yet we in the United States and the rest of the world would not know about it for nearly a third of a year. There is something terribly wrong with that and I hope your investigation will get to bottom of it quickly.

Sincerely,



Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senator