



Rocky Hill Acres

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Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA
FISI Docket Clerk
Docket 02-015DF, Room 102
Cotton Annex, 300 C Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20250-3700

02-015DF-53
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Joan Hollifield



Gentlemen:

I am responding to the above proposal to lift import restrictions for ratites and ratite products from Australia and New Zealand, I am very much "AGAINST" doing this.

I represent, not only myself, but many other ostrich ranchers as well.

As American ostrich farmers, we are struggling, like all American farmers, at this time, to keep our businesses going. We raise our birds for both meat and leather and the industry is now beginning to grow domestically in this country. The meat is a very healthy meat that is high in nutrition, high in iron, and low in fat and cholesterol. Our birds, like most American ostrich are raised using no added antibiotics, growth hormones or animal by-products.

It is very important that we be able to sell our meat and meat products, our hides and leather products our feathers and our eggs for a reasonable price in order to remain in business.

Unlike other poultry, ostrich takes upwards of a year or longer to be ready for marketing. That represents a considerable investment of time, money, and resources, all of which are in short supply to American farmers. We get no subsistence from the government. And now, our own government is going to essentially provide subsistence to the Australian and New Zealand producers by opening the American market to them. They already get subsistence from their governments.

We have worked with the USDA, FDA, state and national Farm Bureaus, state departments of agriculture, colleges and universities, and state and federal governments to enact legislation for the safety, control and regulation of ratite processing and marketing. We are currently working with the USDA in getting legislation written to cover ratites in the GIPSA. We are doing everything we can to ensure our production and processing facilities are following established rules and regulations, not only to produce a superior product, but to ensure the American public, which buys the products, are receiving a safe and wholesome product. **The importation of Australian and New Zealand products severely undermines all these efforts.**

All American ratite growers (emu and Ostrich) will be hurt enormously by passage of an Agreement to lift the import restrictions with Australia and New Zealand. **Please reconsider and withdraw this rule.**

Sincerely,
Joan Hollifield
Joan Hollifield

Member of Texas Ostrich Association and American Ostrich Association