

F.S.I.S Docket
Docket#03-0251F
Room 102, Cotton Annex
300 12th and C Street SW
Washington D.C 20250-3700

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J.P. Seabeck

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Dear Editor:

My letter to you is in regards to the "Mouthing Rule" issue in the cattle industry. Having been a one-third owner of a 76,000 acre ranch in Montana for 12 years, I have had the experience of mouthing a great deal of cattle.

Most of these so-called experts that have advocated this rule have not had the hands-on experience to know why some cattle mouth differently than others. It has a lot to do with the breed of cattle but, mostly, the variety of feed that cattle have been grazing on. Cattle run in arid, dry areas tend to show more age (even at mouthing) than cattle that have been eating lush, green, soft grass. At our Montana ranch this was very evident, as the grass there was short and dry. This type of pasture also shows up in the 10 or so other Western States.

No mention has been made of the conditions of the soil cattle graze on. Dry, stony, gravelly, soil and other types of dirt also have an affect on the teeth of cattle, and I have seen 4 or 5 year old cows practically smooth mouthed.

Many producers sell first and second calf heifers that are under 30 months of age when they lose or abort a calf or have not been bred. If this rule is issued it will be a terrible loss to the producers, as feeders will not buy the cattle. I have been in the livestock business for 71 years and I have never experienced such foolish rules enacted to the detriment of the cattle producers.

The frivolous report from the International BSE panel caused a big market drop in the cattle industry. It is this kind of reporting that will cause an erroneous condition in our industry.

30 or 40 years ago, I urged the USDA and the P&S to stop slaughtering downer animals and to include really bad cancer eyed cattle from going into the system. It is time this is STOPPED and it should be now!

Yes, it is time for changes in some of these committees, and I vote Republican.

Sincerely,



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