

February 16, 2004

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Re: Docket 03-0251F

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am deeply disturbed over the USDA's decision to consider lifting the ban on human consumption of downed animals. Until the current ban was enacted, the USDA had been taking serious risks with the public's health. Only a small fraction of downers were ever tested for Mad Cow Disease, essentially leaving the safety of meat to luck. It is commonsense that we should not eat animals that are sick or diseased; this is not much different than eating spoiled meat.

The current ban should remain intact permanently and should not be watered down in any way. Further, the ban should extend to the consumption of all meats, including poultry, pork, sheep, and so forth. There is no difference between consuming a diseased cow and a diseased pig – both can be fatal.

Besides the issue of human health, I support the ban because it would give "farmers" an incentive to treat their animals more humanely. I am appalled at the way food animals are treated in this country. The laws that exist to protect these animals from cruelty are rarely enforced by the USDA. Perhaps some level of this brutality can be reduced by the ban on downed animals.

Respectfully,



Gemma Wilkinson
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