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"Improve the economic well-being of agriculture and enhance the quality of farm family life."

February 29, 2004

FSIS Docket Clerk
Room 102, Cotton Annex
300 12th and C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

In reference to: Docket Number #03-025IF

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on FSIS' proposal regarding the handling of specified risk materials (SRM) and non-ambulatory animals. This has been a very emotional and economically-difficult time for our state's livestock producers, and the opportunity to be involved in this rulemaking is greatly appreciated.

First, we would offer our support for regulations which would ban specific parts from cattle from the human food supply, provided they have been scientifically proven to be at-risk for BSE transmission. In our review of the literature, it appears that FSIS' recommendations for SRMs is consistent with the current pool of scientific knowledge, and we would support these restrictions.

Our major concern continues to lie with the broad definition of "non-ambulatory disabled" cattle. FSIS suggests that cattle that have broken a limb during transport should fall under this definition and be classified as "unfit" for human consumption. In addition, we have had conversations with packers who have told us they will no longer accept animals that are "stoved up," have foot rot, or even have laminitis. In our opinion, the FSIS decision to not allow producers to present these animals for harvest, goes against all common-sense and scientific-based principles. These cattle show virtually no risk for BSE transmission to humans. It simply is a waste of perfectly-good animal protein, and places a huge economic burden on the producer. In addition, this may hamper BSE surveillance efforts should these animals be euthanized on the farm, rather than to the harvesting facility.

Thank you again for the consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU®

Philip Nelson
President

JRF



ILLINOIS AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION®

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