



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION®

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April 6, 2004

FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket #03-038IF
Room 102, Cotton Annex
300 12th and C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Dear Sir or Madam:

The American Farm Bureau Federation appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) interim final rule to ensure that meat obtained from Advanced Meat Recovery (AMR) systems does not contain any central nervous system tissue. Farm Bureau supports efforts to prevent Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in the United States. The efforts must be science based and prudent for livestock producers.

The vertebral column and skull in cattle 30 months and older will be considered inedible; these tissues cannot be used in Advanced Meat Recovery Systems (AMR). AMR is an industrial technology that removes muscle tissue from the bone of beef carcasses under high pressure without incorporating bone material when operated properly. AMR product can be labeled as "meat." FSIS has previously had regulations in place that prohibit spinal cord from being included in products labeled as "meat." The regulation, which was effective upon publication in the Federal Register, expands that the prohibition include dorsal root ganglia and clusters of connected nerve cells.

The new regulations are key in protecting the American public from being exposed to the BSE agent through food. The measures will result in certain products no longer being available for human consumption and certain cuts of meat may no longer be available from cattle over 30 months of age. In addition, there will probably be additional labor required at slaughter plants to remove and segregate the tissues.

Farm Bureau supports the interim final rule and the opportunity to submit comments to the USDA.

Sincerely,

Bob Stallman
President