

January 13, 2000

FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket # 98027R
Room 102, Cotton Annex
300 12th, Street SW
Washington DC 20250-3700

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98-027R-24
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Betty Smith

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am a small business owner and was raised in Colorado's cattle country.

There are few rich cattlemen most are small cow or calf operations in serious debt. They earn a living feeding America. Their herds are decimated by both hot and cold weather. If they were not family operations, they could not afford to be in business. The whole family works and run these farms and ranches.

The purpose of my letter is to inform USDA that every American household depends on these men and women in the cattle industry.

Our counterparts who buy and process these cattle employ thousands of workers who also depend on cattle for their jobs. These men and women, who work in the packinghouses, families consume the meat they process.

If there were a problem with wholesomeness or a food safety concern-they would be the loudest whistle blowers. Because both their and my families would suffer. Packinghouse work is hard; it is generally hot on the slaughter floor and cold on the processing side. They are not in air conditioned offices. They are the laborers working to feed our families.

Many of my friends who have small farms raising cattle also work in a packinghouse. One of them told me about how the National Consumers League, of which I had never heard of before, was trying to ban the use of meat recovery machines and force the packers to remodel their plants so that they would have to trim the meat from bones by hand.

I ask you, have you ever seen what happens to these men and women? After a few years they can't even hold a knife because of carpal tunnel problems. Their hands and wrists are crippled for life. Women suffer more than men because of periodic water retention.

When I asked why would this National Consumers League be against using a machine to do this difficult job, I was informed that the National Consumers League thought there was more iron in the meat that possibly could come from the marrow.

That is ridiculous, ask yourself the question, how many women take iron supplements? Why do they take iron supplements? Because they don't have enough iron in their diet is

why and if there is a little added iron in our ground beef supply it helps. I don't know how much iron they are talking about, but as I understand it, the type of iron that is added is the kind our bodies most easily absorb.

I asked him if this Consumers League was in the clutches of the vitamin industries.

When was the last time you either read a cookbook or made good vegetable soup? Every recipe that I know of calls for a good beef knuckle or another bone that contains marrow. It is flavorful and nutritious. People have consumed marrow for thousands of years, even primitive people knew it was nutritious. The American Indian cracked the long bones for marrow.

It is important for USDA to understand that we mothers are tired of busybody organizations disrupting the cattle and meat business with innuendo and just because they are in our nation's capital doesn't give them the right to speak for us or use political influence to persuade USDA to do as they wish.

How many of these busy bodies have ever helped a calf be born in a snowstorm? How many of them have ever been in or worked in a packinghouse? Are they all vegetarians in the clutches of the vitamin industry?

We have the world's most economical and safest supply of meat. We don't need more busy bodies pressuring for more regulations so they can raise more funds to stay employed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betty Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Betty Smith
12422 W 68th Ave.
Arvada, CO 80004
303-425-9119