



## OCA Weekly Update – February 29, 2008

### Missed an Update? Looking for Something You Read in a Past Issue?

Visit <http://www.cattle.guelph.on.ca/weekly-updates/weekly-update.asp> to download archived OCA Weekly Updates as PDF files. They are posted by 5pm on the day of issue.

### In Brief:

#### Dollars for Equipment Purchase Available to Beef Producers

Calgary, Alta, February 29, 2008: Beef producers who have participated in a Verified Beef Production (VBP) workshop are eligible for up to \$750 per purchase toward equipment that assists with food safety practices.

The funding is available from the On-Farm Implementation (OFI) fund of the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program. This program has been extended to March 2009.

“What I like about the equipment fund is it has a very real impact,” says Manitoba beef producer Betty Green, who helps deliver the program as part of her role as a VBP coordinator. “Equipment can make a big difference. It not only helps make the work easier, but it makes sure a job is done the right way.”

Examples of equipment that may be purchased include: hand-held RFID tag readers, computer software to track medication withdrawals, extension for chutes to facilitate neck injections, scale/calibration device for medicated feeds, and disposal containers for used medical bottles.

“The producers who purchase this equipment do so to improve their technique or improve their procedures at the farm level,” says Green, part of the Green family operation near Fisher Branch, which includes a 1,000-head cow-calf operation and a feedlot. “It’s always nice when you’re rewarding the producers who are doing things right. That’s what the equipment funding is set-up to do.”

VBP is Canada's recognized on-farm food safety program for beef – a program designed to uphold consumer confidence in the products and good practices of this country's beef producers.

By attending a VBP workshop – any one of several held regularly across the country – producers help keep up to date with standard operating procedures that support on-farm food safety. They also have the option to complete additional steps to become VBP registered, which can bring marketing advantages by providing verified assurance that the operation's practices meet recognized VBP standards.

The equipment available for purchase through OFI is not required to meet VBP standards, but it can help producers meet those standards and do their job more effectively, says Green. “Good tools can go a long way to help. With the equipment funding, producers can get those with less of a dent to their pocketbooks.”

For producers who haven't participated in the VBP program, the first step to become eligible for the funding is to sign-up to attend a VBP workshop. Information on workshops is available through VBP provincial coordinators, who are listed on the “VBP Across Canada” section of the VBP Web site, located at [www.verifiedbeef.org](http://www.verifiedbeef.org). Producers can also get contact information by calling their provincial cattle association office.

Producers who have attended a VBP workshop can apply for equipment funding by contacting their provincial VBP program coordinator ahead of purchase. The coordinator will then assist the producer with an assessment of equipment eligibility and provide a Producer Declaration form to use in the process of obtaining funding.

More information on the OFI program, including further perspective from Green, is featured in a new article, “Equipment funding pays off,” now available on the VBP Web site.

## **Mexico and Barbados Open to Canadian Breeding Cattle**

OTTAWA, Ontario, February 25, 2008 - The Government of Mexico today announced they will now allow the import of breeding cattle in addition to Canada's current access for beef and beef products, and that revised conditions for export of breeding cattle to Barbados have been accepted.

The news was welcomed by the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, and the Honourable David Emerson, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics.

"This is good news for Canadian livestock exporters and an important step in restoring market access with all of our trading partners," said Minister Ritz. "Working hard to restore export markets for our livestock producers is one more way this Government is putting farmers first. This government remains committed to resolving market access issues for beef and cattle, based on sound science, to create opportunities for Canadian industry and farm families."

"The government welcomes Mexico's decision to expand our market access to include breeding cattle and Barbados' revision of conditions for exports of breeding cattle, said Minister Emerson. "This is excellent news for our cattle industry and another important step in our ongoing efforts to restore full market access in beef and cattle with all of our trading partners."

Mexico and Barbados join a growing number of countries that have resumed trade in live cattle with Canada.

Canadian products now approved for export to Mexico include beef derived from animals under 30 months of age and dairy and beef breeding cattle. Access for Barbados now includes the full range of Canadian beef products and all breeding cattle.

Canada continues to work with trading partners to pursue full access for exports of animals and animal products, consistent with the guidelines of the World Organization for Animal Health.

## **BSE Case Confirmed in Alberta**

OTTAWA, February 26, 2008 - The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has confirmed bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a six-year-old dairy cow from Alberta. The animal's carcass is under CFIA control, and no part of it entered the human food or animal feed systems.

The CFIA has confirmed the animal's birthdate as December 21, 2001. Its age and location are consistent with previous cases detected in Canada. This case will not affect Canada's Controlled Risk country status, as recognized by the World Organization for Animal Health. This status clearly acknowledges the effectiveness of Canada's surveillance, risk mitigation and eradication measures. Based on science, it is not expected that this case should impact access to any of Canada's current international markets for cattle and beef.

As Canada progresses toward the eradication of BSE, the periodic detection of a small number of cases is fully expected. Canada's BSE surveillance program, which targets the highest risk animals and regions, continues to benefit from very strong producer participation. At the same time, Canada's animal and human health safeguards prevent potentially harmful cattle tissues from entering the human food and animal feed systems.

An epidemiological investigation directed by international guidelines is underway to identify the animal's herd mates at the time of birth and potential pathways by which it might have become infected. Once completed, a report on the investigation will be publicly released.

## **Provincial Funding Announcement: December 14, 2007**

Specific information for producers on the new Ontario Cattle, Hog and Horticulture Payment is available by calling Agricorp at 1-877-838-5144.

*A PDF is also posted on the OCA Web Site at*

<http://www.cattle.guelph.on.ca/PDFs/2008/InfoSheet-Dec.14Announcement.pdf>

**Changes to Regulation 54 of the Beef Cattle Marketing Act Came into Effect on January 1, 2008**

Please note that due to GST reduction from 6% to 5% on January 1, 2008 and changes to regulations of the Beef Cattle Marketing Act (check-off increased to \$3.00/head on January 1, 2008), OCA has developed revised check-off forms which will be applicable to all transactions made on or after January 1, 2008.

- OCA Check-off Deduction Remittance Report for Individuals
- OCA Check-off Deduction Remittance Report for Licensed Dealers
- Form 102 Seven Business Day Dealer Exemption Statement

The new check-off forms, as well as more detailed information, are now available at <http://www.cattle.guelph.on.ca/Checkoff2008/index.asp>, as PDF files.

### **Canadian Farm Business Management Council Agriwebinar Series**

The Canadian Farm Business Management Council is again this year promoting their Agriwebinar series. All sessions are free. In order to view the webinars you must register, but only once for all of them. For more information and to register go to <http://www.agriwebinar.com/>

2007/2008 CFBMC Agriwebinar Schedule - Each Monday at noon EST

March 3

Paul Paquin *Institut des nutraceutiques et des aliments fonctionnels, Université Laval*  
Dairy Ingredients Issues

### **Amendments to Advance Payments Program Receive Royal Assent**

OTTAWA, Ontario, February 28, 2008 – The Government of Canada today delivered real action for Canadian livestock producers. Amendments to the *Agricultural Marketing Products Act* (AMPA) received Royal Assent after swift all party support in both Houses.

"This Government has always put farmers first. We listen to producers, we work with them and today we delivered," said the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board. "This Bill will provide improved cash flow to all commodity groups; livestock producers in particular will have easier access up to \$3.3 billion in loans. When Canadian farm families face tough times, this Government is right there, with solid support, to get them back on their feet."

The Government has already delivered flexible and bankable programs that will provide up to \$1.5 billion in funding to livestock producers in late 2007 and 2008. The changes to the Advance Payments Program (APP) through the amendments to AMPA will make sure Canadian producers can access up to \$400,000 in repayable advances. Farmers should be able to apply in late March or early April.

The proposed amendments to the APP will provide easier access to immediate cash flow by:

- Removing the requirement for livestock producers to use a Business Risk Management program such as AgriStability as security for a cash advance and allowing producers to use inventory as security. This brings the treatment of livestock more in line with other produced commodities.
- Adding "severe economic hardship" as a condition to offer emergency advances, on the recommendation of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Finance.
- Revising the security requirements for emergency advances and increasing the emergency advance available to producers from a maximum of \$25,000 to \$400,000 in conditions of severe economic hardship.

Taken together, program improvements made in December and proposed changes to AMPA represent significant changes to advance payments. Producers will have quicker and easier access to cash advances and, if all producers take advantage of the improved program, an estimated \$3.3 billion in advance payments will be available. The federal government has worked with industry in developing the changes to AMPA.

Other initiatives designed to help Canadian farmers include providing the Canadian Pork Council \$50 million to deliver a cull breeding swine program that will help in the restructuring of the industry. As

well, the Government is working with industry to review meat inspection user fees to assess their impact on competitiveness in the sector. This is in addition to the Government's commitment of \$80 million to help the industry adjust to new feed ban regulations.

The Government will continue to work with the livestock industry to find ways of helping it position itself to be competitive in the long term. These measures include enhancing market access efforts, reducing the regulatory burden and examining means to reduce the cost of the feed ban implementation.

### **Canadian Farm Leaders Attend 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of Canada's Largest Farm Organization**

(OTTAWA) – Canadian farmer leaders emerged yesterday from the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). The leaders are farmers from 23 provincial and commodity farmer organizations across the country, representing farmers from every province and commodity sector in Canada. They met to discuss the issues facing the Canadian agriculture industry today, including international trade talks, the progress of national agriculture policy development, environmental sustainability in agriculture and food safety issues.

The theme of this year's meeting was "The ties that bind: forging new alliances." CFA delegates had an opportunity to meet with and hear from representatives of other producer organizations that are not currently members of the CFA, including the Canadian Sheep and Canadian Goat Federations, the Canadian Cervid Alliance, the Canadian Ornamental Horticulture Alliance and Alberta Beekeepers.

"CFA has always worked hard to represent equally the interests of all Canadian agricultural producers in every sector," said Bob Friesen, CFA President. "It was very valuable to hear about the challenges faced by these organizations. Their issues often don't get as much attention and prominence in the national agriculture debate, yet they are producers too and every bit as deserving of support. CFA members look forward to working with these organizations on their issues and challenges in the future."

In discussions and resolutions on international trade CFA delegates reaffirmed their commitment to Canada's balanced approach to global trade negotiations. Canadian Chief Agricultural Trade Negotiator Steve Verheul and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Lead Negotiator Denis Landreville gave excellent updates on the status of WTO and bilateral trade negotiations respectively. Following on the meetings CFA members agreed to continue pushing for an "AgriFlex" program component to be added to the suite of new programs under growing forward. Delegates held discussions on key environmental issues including continuing to push for support for a national ALUS program, projects for promoting renewable energy technology in agriculture, and issues surrounding the Own Use Import (OUI) and Growers' Own Use (GROU) programs. On food safety CFA delegates reaffirmed their position that national and commodity on-farm food safety programs are industry-developed and should continue to be industry-led and administered.

On Wednesday CFA welcomed keynote speaker Wendy Mesley, journalist and host of the CBC program "Marketplace". Mesley spoke about her recent program on Product of Canada food labeling and issues around consumer information and the media. Her talk reinforced CFA's push for a new "Grown in Canada" food label.

Canadian farm leaders were pleased the Minister of Agriculture, Gerry Ritz, showed he understands the importance of meeting with Canada's largest representative farmer organizations by appearing to address delegates on Thursday. However the farm leaders expressed strong concern with the political tone and content of some of the Minister's remarks, as they had come prepared to hear from the Minister and hold a working discussion on important industry issues such as trade and the 'Growing Forward' framework. Delegates were disappointed the Minister was unable to stay and answer questions.

Andrew Marsland, Assistant Deputy Minister of AAFC, gave an update on the process of developing the 'Growing Forward' policy framework and engaged in a dialogue with delegates. CFA members committed to continuing to work in close partnership with the government in building 'Growing Forward.' Some audio highlights from the CFA Annual Meeting, including the Minister's speech, will be posted on the CFA web site over the coming week.

### **Government of Canada Set to Introduce Amendments to CWB Act**

OTTAWA, Ontario, February 29, 2008 – The Government of Canada is committed to giving Western Canadian barley producers marketing freedom and today announced an Act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act and chapter 17 of the Statutes of Canada, 1998, will be introduced in the House of

Commons early next week. The announcement was made by the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board.

"This Government listens to farmers. That is why we are taking action to give Western Canadian barley producers the same marketing freedom producers in the rest of the country already enjoy," said Minister Ritz. "This bill will deliver on our Throne Speech commitment and will bring barley marketing freedom to the strong and growing majority of producers who are demanding it."

"Western Canadian barley producers are best qualified to make their own marketing decisions," added Minister Ritz. "This Government's new legislation will give Western Canadian producers the freedom to make those barley marketing choices."

### **Oxford Steps to Leadership 2008 – It's Back**

Who?

Any community-minded resident of Oxford County. Maximum of 25 participants will be accepted, including up to 5 students age 15-19 years.

Why?

To encourage the personal development of Oxford County residents; to expand the leadership skills of community-minded individuals; and to initiate organizational and community involvement in Oxford County.

Where?

Each session will be in a different location throughout Oxford County. The program will include a 1-day workshop and a 1-day educational bus tour throughout the County.

On people's list of fears, it's number one! Learn tools and techniques to speak effectively in a large or small group setting including tips for thanking and introducing guest speakers. This session will also give you the tools to write an effective media release to communicate with the media.

Find out more about Oxford County and its many assets. Economic, agriculture, agri-business, historical and cultural aspects will be highlighted on this tour.

"Effective Organizations" - Learn ways to make meetings more productive and how you can help create an organization that can make a difference.

Find out how to run your organization smoothly while dealing with community issues.

Saturday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 – 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. "1-Day Workshop" - *Mt. Elgin Community Centre, Mt. Elgin*

"Responsibilities and Liabilities of Directors" - What is your responsibility and liability as a board member? Responsible procedures for organizations and individuals elected to a board will be discussed using case study examples.

"Stress & Time Management and Conflict Resolution" Time management tips that will help you meet your goals successfully and not stress you out! Learn how organizations and individuals can resolve conflicts effectively.

"Marketing & Fundraising for your Organization" - Learn ways to market your organization to create community awareness and build sustainability. Fundraising is often necessary—learn the essential features for any successful activity.

Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007—7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. – *Fusion Youth Centre, Ingersoll*

## “Working with the Media”

Print, radio and TV—learn to utilize the press to your advantage. In addition, learn ways to achieve clear writing.

Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007—7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. – *County Building, Woodstock*  
“Community Issues and the Political Process”

Group discussion on local and organization issues and how to deal with them. What is the process and how do you effectively lobby for change? How do you foster greater involvement in the democratic process to the benefit of individuals and the community?

Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007—7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. – *North Blenheim Insurance, Bright*  
“Ironing Out Community Issues”

Learn some effective problem solving techniques that will help you formulate an action plan for your community.

Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007—7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. – *Ingersoll Creative Arts Centre, Ingersoll*  
“The Challenge - Shaping Our Future”

Where will you go from here? Organizations that will be successful in the future need to think creatively and be willing to adapt to change. A motivational speaker will put the program into perspective and challenge participants to strive for excellence. Graduation ceremony will follow.

How?

For more information or to obtain an application form, contact: Brenda West or Patti Arts, Program Coordinators, Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (519) 537-6621. [brenda.west@ontario.ca](mailto:brenda.west@ontario.ca) or [patti.arts@ontario.ca](mailto:patti.arts@ontario.ca)

Cost?

(Including all resource materials)

\$200.00 per participant (Due November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007 or \$250.00 after November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Student (age 15-19) \$100.00 (Due November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007) or \$150.00 (after November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Note: If financial constraints are a concern, please contact us.

Participation in Steps to Leadership Will:

- Build self-confidence and leadership skills
- Allow you to learn from other local leaders
- Help you and/or your organization become more effective and
- Involve you in the planning of your local community

Don't Sit Back! Get Involved! Registration is limited, so APPLY NOW!

### **Workshop: Making RFID of Value to Me**

Event organized by OCA and OMAFRA

This workshop will be of interest to any producer or group considering the purchase of a reader to capture RFID numbers from tags and software to use the numbers for multi-purposes within a production system.

Date and Locations:

Monday, March 31 – Boardroom, David Carson Auction Services, Listowel

Tuesday, April 1 – Ilderton Community Centre

Wednesday, April 2 – Codrington Community Centre

Thursday, April 3 – White Pine Boardroom, Midhurst

Workshop Program:

10 to 10:30 AM – Coffee / Refreshments / Registration

10:30 AM to noon – RFID background  
Capabilities and limitations of readers and software  
What questions to ask when considering a system?  
What will a system do? What records?  
(shipping, health, treatments, performance, verification)

Noon to 1 PM – Lunch provided

1 PM to 2:30 PM – Demonstrations of readers and software  
- Industry presentations of their products  
- Farmer presentations on their experiences installing and using a system.

Register:

To ensure you get a lunch, please register by calling the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300

For further information:

Don Blakely, Fergus OMAFRA 519-846-3396  
Nancy Noecker, Kemptville OMAFRA 613-258-8476  
Dan Ferguson, OCA 705-924-3225  
Ron Wooddisse, OCA 519-638-3571

**Growing Your Opportunities, Traction and AgriBusiness ecampus**

Growing your Opportunities:

This workshop is for Farm and rural based entrepreneurs who want to learn how to tap into new value added opportunities from idea to market.

Over The Two Days You Will:

- Learn how to identify, find and evaluate new value added ideas
- Learn how to put your ideas into action using the seven step value added development process
- Learn how to connect with the right market channels
- Learn how to find innovative ways to market your products and services
- Learn how to build a business that can support your new idea
- Learn how to create a dynamite, but simple business plan
- Learn how to finance the different stages of your new ventures

- Learn how to save time and money in the development process
- Learn how to price your products properly
- Learn how to manage your risk
- Explore case studies of how innovative rural and farm businesses that have developed their value added ideas and opportunities
- Follow a new product from conception to integration into the marketplace

Growing your Opportunities  
 Orangeville  
 Day 1: Sat. Feb. 23  
 Day 2: Sat. Mar. 1  
 \$75 per person (includes \$3.57 GST)

Growing your Opportunities  
 Hanover  
 Day 1: Mon. Feb. 25  
 Day 2: Mon. Mar. 3  
 \$75 per person (includes \$3.57 GST)

Growing your Opportunities  
 Clinton  
 Day 1: Tues. Feb. 26  
 Day 2: Tues. Mar. 4  
 \$75 per person (includes \$3.57 GST)

Growing your Opportunities  
 Port Hope  
 Day 1: Thurs. Feb. 28  
 Day 2: Thurs. Mar. 6  
 \$75 per person (includes \$3.57 GST)

Growing your Opportunities  
 Napanee Area  
 Day 1: Mon. Mar. 17  
 Day 2: Fri. Mar. 28  
 \$75 per person (includes \$3.57 GST)

Growing your Opportunities  
 Tillsonburg  
 Day 1: Wed. Mar. 19  
 Day 2: Wed. Mar. 26  
 \$75 per person (includes \$3.57 GST)

#### Traction

Traction: Skills to Grow is a program developed by Guelph-based Juice Inc. The program has been well received by farmers and producers within the agricultural community, who are attending with their spouses and family members to ensure they are aligned in the planning of their farm's future. Traction participants, ranging in age from their early 20s to their late 60s from various commodity groups, have consistently rated the program a 4.9 on a five-point scale. Uniquely designed in conjunction with producers, advisors and industry leaders, Traction provides a pragmatic and process-based approach to four main areas:

- Taking stock
- Innovation
- Communication
- Goal Setting
- Planning

What participants are saying:

- “Seeing the real life examples helped me to see how understanding the other person’s point of view can solve problems that otherwise seemed impossible to solve.”
- “This gave me a whole new way of approaching problems and relationships”.
- “Problems just don’t seem to be overwhelming after taking this course. Our family left with tools to help us keep unstuck and moving ahead more smoothly.”
- “Being successful as a farmer requires ongoing development of not only your industry knowledge but your communication skills. This high energy program gave me new tools to take home that will keep the ideas flowing.”

AgriBusiness eCampus Project  
<http://agribusinesscampus-com.rkd.ca/default.aspx>  
 Your Home – offered by the University of Guelph, Kemptville Campus  
 Launch date – early February  
 variable

#### AgriBusiness eCampus Project

The AgriBusiness eCampus (ABeC) is a web-based and face-to-face learning centre offering a range of topics to assist farmers in managing their farm business in today’s increasingly complex environment. The ABeC offers a “one-stop-shop” for practical, real-world business solutions through life-long learning in agribusiness management and entrepreneurship.

Our eCourses are designed by top experts in the agribusiness field with you in mind. Our focus is on developing skills that are immediately applicable to you and your farm business. Courses are self-paced and self-assessed, allowing you to fit your learning around other farm and family commitments. Courses provide you with networking opportunities through question and answer sessions and streamed discussion with industry experts and peers. Course facilitators are always just a phone call or click away to answer your questions and assist you with any course-related or technical problems.

Courses are currently being offered in: Strategic and Business Planning, Succession Planning, Domestic and Global Marketing, Commodity Marketing, and Human Resources.

#### **CCA Welcomes New CanFax Manager**

Calgary, AB – The Canadian Cattlemen’s Association (CCA) is pleased to announce that Rob Leslie has accepted the position of Manager for CanFax, a division of the CCA that provides market analysis for the Canadian beef industry, starting March 3, 2008.

In addition to overseeing CanFax services and operations as the senior market analyst, Rob will be actively involved in U.S. advocacy functions in the western states.

“With Rob’s experience in the feedlot sector and in the veterinary pharmaceutical industry, we believe he will be a good fit for this position. He knows and understands the beef industry and is also a proven leader and motivator, all of which will benefit both CanFax and the industry,” says CCA President Hugh Lynch-Staunton.

Rob has a significant amount of management and market knowledge. Prior to coming to CanFax, he worked for Wyeth Animal Health where he was responsible for increasing and managing sales, among other duties. Prior to Wyeth Animal Health he worked for Pfizer Animal Health as Cattle Product Manager and Territory Manager in Southern Alberta. He was the cattle manager for Western Feedlots Ltd., a \$100 million feedlot company, and before that, he owned and operated a large commercial cow/calf and stocker/feeder operation. He holds an Agricultural MBA from the University of Guelph.

"I am looking forward to this opportunity to work in a different area of the beef industry," says Rob. "I look forward to my new role and working with the CCA/CanFax. CanFax has been instrumental in the cattle industry for many years providing cattle producers with information to manage their business to stay ahead of the curve. The legacy of CanFax is one I don't take lightly and it is a huge responsibility to continue to bring value for both the present landscape and the changes in the industry to come.

### **University of Guelph Beef Cattle Transportation Study: Assistance of Beef Producers Requested**

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is currently assessing how cattle are transported in Canada with intentions of changing the laws and regulations that govern the industry. Changes proposed by CFIA may increase trucking costs for beef producers. In an effort to better understand current transportation conditions for the movement of cattle in Canada, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association is funding a University of Guelph research study to examine how current transportation conditions (space/loading densities and travel time) impact animal welfare, health, and performance for weaned calves and yearlings (500-900 lbs). The objectives of this research are to determine if current procedures for transporting cattle ensure animal welfare and how they impact health and performance after arrival. The ultimate goal of this work is to ensure animal welfare while increasing the demand for Ontario grown beef.

The help of beef producers is needed in this study to collect data on cattle loads that are received at feedlots and to follow their health for approximately 8 weeks after arrival. Surveys have been constructed to collect data from producers and truckers on the same loads of cattle during transit and following arrival. The more information that can be collected on how cattle are transported in Canada will provide CFIA with industry data that will support current trucking regulations without the need for the proposed costly changes. Please consider participating in this research study to provide valuable information on the Ontario Beef industry. If you would like to participate in this benchmark study or desire more information, please contact one of the University of Guelph researchers involved in this study by telephone or e-mail: *Matt Thrower* (519- 827-1346 or e-mail [mthrower@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mthrower@uoguelph.ca)); *Ken Bateman* (519-824-4120, Ext 5-4006; [kbateman@ovc.uoguelph.ca](mailto:kbateman@ovc.uoguelph.ca)), *Ira Mandell* (519-824-4120, Ext 5-3337; [imandell@uoguelph.ca](mailto:imandell@uoguelph.ca)), *Tina Widowski* (519-824-4120, Ext 5-2408; [twidowsk@uoguelph.ca](mailto:twidowsk@uoguelph.ca))

### **BIC Bits**

#### **Growing Canadian Beef Export Value**

The Beef Information Centre (BIC) is working with retailers and distributors to help increase the volume of Canadian beef exports to the United States at a value relative to the USDA grades. One of the key strategies to achieve this goal is to grow opportunities within specific market segments such as the Hispanic and Asian markets that look for quality beef attributes and are not as committed to USDA grade designations.

To help establish Canadian beef programs and to promote the attributes of Canadian beef – the "Canadian Beef Advantage", BIC worked with a 16-member sales team from Cargill Food Distribution (CFD) in Vernon, California and provided them with training for sales of Canadian beef. BIC was also given the opportunity to identify potential candidates for Canadian beef programs from CFD's clientele and was then invited to participate in joint sales calls to establish relationships with Cargill's clients and further promote the Canadian Beef Advantage. Price has traditionally been the only advantage to U.S. buyers of Canadian beef. However, as a result of these meetings, the CFD sales team noted that buyers were now recognizing the additional attributes of Canadian beef (such as colour and yield).

"We are getting equivalent USDA price because our customers are seeing the value," says Javier Bonilla, sales manager for Cargill Food Distribution.

The CFD efforts have contributed to the strong uptake from current U.S. partners with BIC during the first quarter of this fiscal year with a total of 691,349 lbs of additional Canadian volume.

BIC has already established three market development programs with clients such as R Ranch, C&K Enterprises and Assi Markets in Southern California as a result of this project. The Partner Programs are available to U.S. distributors, retailers, and foodservice operators to help fund private label brand development projects and marketing programs. With these Partner Programs, clients commit to Canadian

beef content and advertising to promote the product creating opportunities to grow sales and build value and volume of products from Canadian distributors. For more information on the U.S. trade opportunities visit [www.canadianbeef.info](http://www.canadianbeef.info).

### Canadian Beef NAMPs It Up

The Beef Information Centre (BIC) recently teamed up with the North American Meat Processors Association (NAMP) to provide centre of the plate training for the first time in Canada on Feb. 21 at the University of Guelph. This event is part of an ongoing educational program that NAMP provides to industry across North America.

The training focuses on adding value to the carcass for both buyers and sellers of beef. Of the three-day training session, one and a half days focused on beef alone. Training started with muscle profiling, identifying the anatomical name of each muscle, followed by the sectioning and cutting of the carcass according to the NAMP guide. During the sectioning of the carcass, opportunities to add value to the carcass were identified so that participants understood how to get the most value out of the carcass for both the buyer and seller.

Canada has always used the NAMP specifications guide and this was an opportunity for BIC to align with U.S. partners and work collectively to train the industry using the North American standard. BIC was able to represent the Canadian industry and explain the unique differences with Canadian food safety standards, quality and production systems and gave specific details on the Canadian grading system. More than 40 international buyers and sellers from Mexico, Israel, United States and Canada attended this event.

“NAMP was very pleased with the turnout which was helped by the endorsement and efforts of the Beef Information Centre. The beef section of the course is by far where the most time and concentration is spent, and having BIC representatives there to speak about the Canadian industry was invaluable. We wanted to make sure that the Canadian industry was well represented, and BIC provided the class with the insights we were looking for,” says Ann Wells, director of scientific and regulatory affairs for NAMP.

NAMP provides this training to buyers and sellers of meat products to help the industry develop a common language and minimize the inconsistency of meat terms and understand the specifications of each cut outlined in the NAMP guide.

### New Local Food Guide Map!

Simcoe County, ON – The Simcoe County Farm Fresh Marketing Association (SCFFMA) is helping to meet growing public demand for local food. It is in the midst of developing a new paper guide map listing farms, farmers’ markets and restaurants that sell and serve local farm fresh products.

“This project is a natural extension of our very successful website [www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca](http://www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca) <<http://www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca/>> .” “We are working with several community partners and supporters in helping to make this project happen.” says Sandra Trainor, Project Manager of SCFFMA. The County of Simcoe’s Information Technology department is working with us in designing a custom map where each farm/business will be added so that folks can find them easily. Nutrition staff from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is writing some healthy eating messages for the map and we are seeking support for the costs of production from several community sources.

2008 Memberships to the SCFFMA is currently open until MARCH 15th 2008. Benefits of joining SCFFMA include;

- Inclusion on the website [www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca](http://www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca) <<http://www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca/>>
- Inclusion on the new Paper Guide Map, (aiming for distribution of 50,000 for 2008)
- A quantity of marketing materials for each farm/business
- Distribution of marketing material in hundreds of locations throughout Simcoe County
- Advertising on area radio stations.
- News releases and media coverage.
- Ads in area publications.

- Community outreach/speaking events raising the awareness of local food.

Those farms, farmers' markets or restaurants that are not yet a member but would like to join, can go to our website or call 705 734-2075.

The SCFFMA is a Non-Profit Corporation formed in 2005. Its mandate is to raise the awareness of the environmental, economic, taste and health reasons for eating locally and to inform all eaters where they can find excellent quality food in Simcoe County. The SCFFMA is funded in part by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Agricultural Adaptation Council.

## Memberships

Memberships for Simcoe County Farm Fresh  
"Increase your marketing reach!"

Deadline - March 15th, 2008 to get on the new Paper Guide Map listing

Contact Sandra Trainor

Project Manager, Simcoe County Farm Fresh Marketing Assoc. Non-Profit Inc.

P: 705 734-2075

F: 705 734-9565

E: [info@simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca](mailto:info@simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca)

[www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca](http://www.simcoecountyfarmfresh.ca)

## **Monsanto 2008 Scholarship Program**

Monsanto Canada has released details of its 2008 Opportunity Scholarship program for grade 12 graduating students from farm families who plan to pursue post-secondary education in agriculture or forestry.

2008 Monsanto Canada Opportunity Scholarships are available to eligible students entering their first year of post-secondary education in agricultural sciences or forestry at a recognized Canadian educational institution. In 2008, Monsanto will award approximately 50 to 60 deserving students with a \$1,500 scholarship to help pay for their studies. Entering its 17th year, the Monsanto Canada Opportunity Scholarship Program has awarded almost \$1 million to thousands of deserving students since the program's inception in 1991.

"Our scholarship program continues to grow and it is certainly one of the most rewarding programs we provide through our corporate giving program," said Trish Jordan, public affairs director with Monsanto Canada. "Every year we are impressed by the achievements and commitment of the students who apply and it is terrific to see the very best and brightest wanting to pursue careers in agriculture or forestry."

Monsanto Canada Opportunity Scholarships are available to students who meet the following criteria:

- Students must come from a family farm and/or forestry background with confirmed plans to enroll in their first year of post-secondary education in an agricultural sciences or forestry program;
- Students must have demonstrated academic excellence, leadership capabilities, and a keen interest and involvement in their rural community;
- Students must submit a completed application form, which includes an essay that outlines what area of agriculture or forestry they would like to work in and why;
- All completed application forms must be post-marked no later than May 16, 2008.
- Scholarship application forms and posters in both French and English were distributed to high schools, 4-H Clubs, provincial and federal agriculture offices, farm retail outlets and seed companies.
- Application forms are also available from Monsanto's CustomCare<sup>®</sup> line at 1-800-667-4944 or they can be accessed online at [www.monsanto.ca](http://www.monsanto.ca).

## **Biogas Information Day – Earlton**

OMAFRA is hosting a biogas systems information day in Earlton on 4 March to provide farmers and food processors an update on producing renewable energy using anaerobic digestion. Paul Klaesi, who built his own biogas system in Cobden, will provide a producer's view of biogas system development. Information will also be provided about available funding programs.

Pre-registration is required. Please call 1-800-461-6132

4 March 2008  
9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Earlton - Golden Age Club"

### **2008 Profitable Pastures Workshops**

The 2008 Profitable Pastures workshops will be held as follows:

- March 26<sup>th</sup> in Elmwood
- March 27<sup>th</sup> in Manvers Hall near Bethany
- March 28<sup>th</sup> in Almonte.

The keynote speaker for these sessions is Don Campbell from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, "Building a Profitable Sustainable Farm". Pre-registration is required, with a cost of just \$35. Please call 519-986-1484 or 1-877-892-8663 to pre-register. More information is available by e-mailing [info@ontarioforagecouncil.com](mailto:info@ontarioforagecouncil.com).

### **The Ontario Co-operative Association invites you to a Co-operative Development Toolkit Workshop**

- Learn more about co-ops
- Connect with local business resources
- Discover why the co-op model works

Due to February winter conditions this workshop has been rescheduled for Wednesday March 26, 2008. All of the other details remain the same: same location, the W.I.S.H Centre, Chatham and same time: 1 to 4pm. Please see the attached invitation for more information about the workshop. This workshop is FREE. However, we ask that you pre-register to allow us to adequately prepare. To register or if you have questions please call 1.888.745.5521 ext. 31 or reply to this email to indicate your attendance.

Using the following link, <http://maps.google.com/> you can type in your beginning address and then the end address: 177 King Street East, Chatham, ON to get directions to the workshop.

Tanya Gracie  
Ontario Co-operative Association  
[tgracie@ontario.coop](mailto:tgracie@ontario.coop)  
1-888-745-5521 ext. 31

*The On Co-op Co-operative Development roadshow/workshop is coming to a city near you. Visit [www.ontario.coop/Toolkit](http://www.ontario.coop/Toolkit) to learn more.*

### **Willabar Ranch Long Yearling Black Angus Bull Sale**

March 18

at the ranch  
Claresholm, AB  
Contact: (403) 625-2060

**Saunders Andemar 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
Purebred Charolais Bull Sale**

March 8<sup>th</sup> 2008 at 2pm  
Keady Livestock Market.  
Be our guest for lunch 11:30am sale day  
Contact: Brent: (519) 986 4165 or Pete: (519) 871 4703

### **Northern Powerpac Bull and Heifer Sale**

2 p.m. Saturday, April 12, 2008  
Temiskaming Livestock Exchange  
New Liskeard, Ontario

### **Your Source For Success Bull Sale**

Red/Black Simmentals & Polled Herefords  
March 29, 2008 @ 2:00pm  
at the farm, Indian River, ON (Just East of Peterborough)  
Join us for lunch!  
for more info contact Billy Elmhirst  
Tel: 705-295-2708 Cell: 705-761-0896  
Email: ircc@nexicom.net  
website: [www.indianrivercattlecompany.com](http://www.indianrivercattlecompany.com)

Also I am the secretary for the Ontario Simmental Association and our Annual Meeting is coming up,  
could it get listed also?

### **Cedardale Charolais 5th Annual Bull Sale**

The Nesbitt Family

Saturday, April 19th, 2008

Offering 20 Purebred Charolais Yearling Bulls  
and 15 Elite Open Heifers

Open House 11 am, Sale 1 pm at the farm  
Nestleton, ON

Contact: (905) 986-4608 for more information or a sale catalogue  
or visit our website @ [www.cedardalefarms.ca](http://www.cedardalefarms.ca)

### **News Index:**

- A) The Humane Society of the UNITED STATES sues to keep sick and injured cows out of food supply: USDA loophole contributed to the largest beef recall in U.S. history**
- B) WASHINGTON: Ag Sec resists 'downer' cow ban**
- C) EDITORIAL: Bad beef: Lessons learned from the largest meat recall in U.S. history**
- D) US: Why is the debate over raw milk is so emotional, when the facts are so clear? Here is a new theory**
- E) OHIO: Cattle growers, retailers have a stake in safety of food and recalls**
- F) CALIFORNIA: Hallmark/Westland likely to close permanently**
- G) OP-ED: Inspect the system**
- H) UK: Foot and mouth costs farmers 21m**
- I) MINNESOTA: Officials: Not quite a bovine TB 'outbreak'**
- J) COPENHAGEN: Foot-and-mouth fears shut down slaughterhouse**
- K) UK: Call for regular testing in dairy and beef herds as survey reveals rise in BVD and IBR levels**
- L) UK: Date for bluetongue movement restriction**
- M) CANADA: BSE Case Confirmed In Alberta**

- N) R-CALF: CANADA continues to detect BSE in younger cattle**
- O) US: Brucellosis in cattle; research facilities**
- P) K-STATE: Researchers collaborate to find new vaccine technology decreases E. coli in beef cattle**
- Q) OTTAWA: Canada confirms new case of mad cow disease**
- R) UK foot-and-mouth free**
- S) COLORADO: Sustainable fuel? Researchers question whether ethanol byproduct taints cattle, meat**
- T) MEXICO to allow imports of Canada dairy cows, cattle next month**
- U) CALIFORNIA: Beef recall affects trade negotiations**
- V) UK: How now, downer cow?**
- W) AUSTRALIA: Cattle have a beef, too**
- X) MINNESOTA TB outbreak causes ND to tighten cattle import regs**

This report prepared with the assistance of Dr. Doug Powell's team at the Universities of Guelph and Kansas State. This service does not allow emails to be sent by responding to this email directly. If you have questions or comments, please contact Lianne Appleby at [lianne@cattle.guelph.on.ca](mailto:lianne@cattle.guelph.on.ca)

**A) The Humane Society of the UNITED STATES sues to keep sick and injured cows out of food supply: USDA loophole contributed to the largest beef recall in U.S. history**

27.feb.08

from a press release

<http://www.hawaiireporter.com/story.aspx?bf6e34e4-2d14-42e2-8072-e112f3222e19>

The Humane Society of the United States today filed suit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to close a dangerous loophole in the agency's regulations that contributed to the recent recall of more than 143 million pounds of beef -- much of which was fed to schoolchildren in at least 40 states and the District of Columbia. The recall was initiated after an HSUS investigation documented shocking acts of animal cruelty to non-ambulatory or "downer" cattle at a slaughterhouse in Chino, Calif.

"USDA has in recent weeks assured the public that sick and crippled cattle are not allowed to enter the food supply, but the agency's regulations actually contradict that assertion," said Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States. "Unless we want yet another dramatic food scare -- further eroding consumer confidence in beef and costing the private sector and the federal government tens of millions of dollars -- we should not hesitate to close this legal loophole and establish an unambiguous no-downer policy that will also help protect crippled animals from egregious abuse." On Thursday, Pacelle is scheduled to testify before a Senate subcommittee examining the issues surrounding the case. He will call on Congress to pass legislation to strengthen the nation's farm animal welfare laws.

Because downer cattle are at a heightened risk for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or "mad cow disease") and other foodborne pathogens, USDA issued an emergency rule in 2004 to prevent downed cattle from being slaughtered for human consumption. However, in 2007, the agency quietly reversed course and relaxed its rules to permit some crippled cows to be slaughtered for human consumption. That loophole -- which fails to adequately prevent the slaughter of animals who are violently forced onto their feet long enough to pass inspection, as well some animals who go down after initial inspection -- precipitated some of the most disturbing incidents documented by an HSUS investigator at the Hallmark slaughter plant, including employees routinely beating cows to try to make them stand, repeatedly electrocuting cows in the face and eyes, and almost inconceivable incidents in which they rammed animals with forklift blades and dragged them by chains.

The lawsuit alleges that the downer loophole is irrational and inconsistent with the USDA's obligations to ensure humane handling and food safety under the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act and the Federal Meat Inspection Act. The suit also alleges that the loophole was promulgated in 2007 without adequate public notice and comment under the federal Administrative Procedure Act.

"The school lunch program should be providing safe and healthy meals for our children -- not serving up sick animals or promoting animal cruelty," said Diana Crossman, a longtime HSUS member and mother of two children in Los Angeles County public school. "USDA is supposed to protect our children, and that doesn't mean telling us one thing and doing something else about allowing sick animals in the food

supply.”

Facts:

- \* The Federal Meat Inspection Act is designed to protect consumers by preventing meat that is “adulterated” -- not fit for human consumption—from entering the food supply.
- \* The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act requires that “the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter shall be carried out only by humane methods.”
- \* Downed cattle may be at higher risk of contamination with foodborne pathogens such as E. coli O157:H7 and Salmonella, as well as the pathogens that cause mad cow disease.
- \* Eating meat from cattle infected with mad cow disease is believed to cause an invariably fatal human neurological disease known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). It may take years for symptoms to develop after eating contaminated meat.

Timeline:

- \* Feb. 17, 2008 -- USDA announces recall of 143 million pounds of beef, the nation’s largest recall to date, from Hallmark/Westland Meat Co.
- \* Feb. 15, 2008 -- San Bernardino County District Attorney Michael A. Ramos charges Daniel Ugarte Navarro with five felony counts under California’s anti-cruelty statute and three misdemeanor counts alleging the use of a mechanical device to move “downer” cows, and a second worker, Jose Luis Sanchez, with three misdemeanors involving downers.
- \* Feb. 5, 2008 -- USDA announces it has pulled its inspectors and shut down the cattle slaughter plant that was the subject of an HSUS undercover investigation. USDA Undersecretary Dr. Richard Raymond cites “egregious violations of humane handling regulations” in pulling inspectors from the plant.
- \* Jan. 31, 2008 -- The HSUS urges schools in 36 states to stop serving Westland meat received through the National School Lunch Program.
- \* Jan. 30, 2008 -- USDA suspends Westland Meat Co. as a supplier to the National School Lunch Program and other federal nutrition programs, in response to the weeks-long HSUS investigation of the plant.
- \* Jan. 30, 2008 -- The HSUS reveals weeks-long investigation’s findings of widespread mistreatment of nonambulatory dairy cows at a Hallmark Meat Packing Co., of Chino, California.
- \* July 13, 2007 -- USDA reverses course and alters federal regulations to permit some crippled cows to be slaughtered for human consumption.
- \* Jan. 12, 2004 -- USDA prohibits all downer cattle from being slaughtered for human consumption, in response to the first U.S. case of BSE discovered in Washington State.

Go to <http://video.hsus.org> to view or download video footage from the investigation.

Contact Jordan Crump with the Humane Society of the United States at:

<mailto:jcrump@humanesociety.org>

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization -- backed by 10.5 million Americans, or one of every 30. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on pro

## **B) WASHINGTON: Ag Sec resists 'downer' cow ban**

28.feb.08

Associated Press

<http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5ggjIDJ5Z2xZSLp6TUi-kRcCFXmPgD8V3IJMO0>

WASHINGTON — U.S. Agriculture Secretary Edward T. Schafer was cited as telling a Senate hearing Thursday that calls from Democratic senators for a complete ban on so-called downer cattle — those unable to walk — from entering the food supply were excessive, but did announce new steps to ensure the safety of the country's meat supply, including more random inspections of slaughterhouses and immediate audits of the 23 plants that supply meat for federal programs, primarily school lunches. Schafer said that downer cattle could occasionally enter the food supply safely, in accordance with USDA rules, after an additional inspection by a veterinarian, stating, "The rules say if one goes down you call the veterinarian to make a judgment. Today I'm convinced the rules in place are such where we are protecting the supply."

Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., chairman of the Senate Appropriations agriculture subcommittee, was quoted as saying, "We cannot allow a single downer cow to enter our food supply under any circumstances," and urged Schafer to install cameras in slaughterhouses.

The story explains it was Schafer's first Capitol Hill appearance since the release in late January of video — shot by the Humane Society of the United States — showing workers at Westland/Hallmark Meat Co. in Chino, Calif., shoving and kicking sick, crippled cattle, forcing them to stand by using electric prods, forklifts and water hoses.

### **C) EDITORIAL: Bad beef: Lessons learned from the largest meat recall in U.S. history**

28.feb.08

Washington Post

Editorial

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/27/AR2008022703193.html>

Not since Upton Sinclair's 1906 book "The Jungle" has the American meat market, according to this editorial, been this shaken. On Jan. 30, the Humane Society of the United States released undercover video showing employees at a Westland/Hallmark Meat Co. plant abusing and forcing into the slaughterhouse animals that could not stand. The actions contained in this footage constitute a violation of federal animal cruelty laws as well as food safety legislation. Animals that can't stand -- so-called "downer" animals -- cannot be used for human consumption without the approval of an Agriculture Department inspector; the inability to stand can be a symptom of mad-cow disease, and it can also lead to wallowing in pathogen-containing feces.

The editorial says that Westland employees violated the law and the culpability of USDA inspectors in this matter is still unclear. In addition to their regular checks upon animals' arrival at the plant and their post-slaughter inspections, inspectors are supposed to make random visits to pens to verify safe and humane handling. If the abuse and slaughter of unapproved downer animals were as common as the Humane Society says they were, inspectors should have noticed. The USDA says it is investigating.

The actions of these individual inspectors aside, several problems are endemic to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. One is understaffing, as about 10 percent of inspector positions are vacant (the full-time presence of an inspector is a requirement for every meat plant). Another problem is how inspectors are deployed, since the inspection process is still largely based on a 1907 law that emphasizes quick, postmortem visual checks of beef, even though the greatest risks lie in pathogens invisible to the naked eye. The USDA could benefit from more flexibility in how it uses its resources. Having the authority to issue mandatory recalls and create more standards for pathogen levels also would help. One legislative proposal would combine the 15 federal agencies responsible for regulating different parts of the food supply into a unified Food Safety Administration. For reasons of efficiency and consistency, it's an attractive idea, but more research needs to be done to ensure that such a restructuring wouldn't create another bureaucratic mess (the Department of Homeland Security comes to mind).

More immediately, the USDA needs to better notify consumers about potential health risks. The agency's policy is to not disclose the list of retail stores known to have sold the recalled meat or products that contain it. This has led to great confusion among consumers over whether anything they've purchased or eaten was affected. The USDA should change this policy and answer that age-old question: Where's the beef?

### **D) US: Why is the debate over raw milk is so emotional, when the facts are so clear? Here is a new theory**

27.feb.08

The Complete Patient

David C. Phippen

<http://www.thecompletepatient.com/journal/2008/2/27/why-is-the-debate-over-raw-milk-so-emotional-when-the-facts.html>

It's interesting that so many discussions here about the benefits of raw milk seem eventually to revert to the emotionally-laden matter of safety, to the argument that raw milk is somehow a special class of food that is inherently unsafe. It happens again following my post about the Michigan research that clearly demonstrates the benefits of raw milk in combating lactose intolerance.

There's nothing logical or rational about the emotional aspect of this, especially when you consider that data from the Centers for Disease Control show raw milk causing an average of 59 illnesses annually (according to data between 1973 and 2005), versus an estimated annual minimum of six million illnesses from food-borne disease overall.

So what's really going on here? How can the arguments be so heated, not just here, but in California, Maryland and various places where the question of our right to access raw milk comes up?

I gained an insight into this contradiction the other day during a discussion with a professor of nutrition at a Massachusetts university. Of course, we got to talking about raw milk and pasteurization, and it was pretty much the usual thing—him explaining how important pasteurization has been as a public health tool and how risky raw milk is. As a matter of fact, he said, pasteurization is so essential it's been extended to apple juice and vegetable juice and almonds. How about that?

But he said something, almost as an aside, that I now realize is more important than many of us appreciate in this debate. "If you have any kind of immune-compromised system, there's a good chance you'll die" from unpasteurized contaminated milk and other foods, he explained. Of course, he didn't say that if you are immune-compromised, you could die from contaminated pasteurized milk, as we saw when four elderly Massachusetts men died last year from listeriosis they got from pasteurized milk.

But what he was really doing, I realized later, was positioning the pasteurization issue (really the sanitizing of all our food) as a minority rights issue. The minority of people with immune problems must be protected, even at the expense of the majority with no immune problems.

Then today, NPR aired a report that the medical community is recommending that all children be given flu shots—not so much to protect them, but to "reduce the spread of flu through communities." In other words, sacrifice a buildup in the kids' natural immunity to "protect" adults who might be vulnerable.

The implication is that the vast majority of people must sacrifice, via sanitizing of food and vaccination, so that immune-compromised people aren't placed at risk. But is that really fair, appropriate, or healthy?

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to suggest that the immune-compromised should be careful about what they eat, whether pasteurized or unpasteurized...and to work at re-building their immunity? That parents with concerns should keep their kids away from raw

milk, while those who want their kids to benefit from raw milk make have access to it?

Even more to the point, why should the vast majority who aren't immune-compromised be placed at risk of becoming immune-compromised because they can't get access to foods that help build immunity?

Have I trashed enough sacred cows for one day?

## **E) OHIO: Cattle growers, retailers have a stake in safety of food and recalls**

27.feb.08

The Plain Dealer

<http://www.cleveland.com/living/plaindealer/index.ssf?/base/living-1/1204018442153120.xml&coll=2>

Retailers have a stake in food safety and what happens with the nation's largest-ever beef recall, say four area businesses.

Tom Heinen, co-owner of Heinen's Fine Foods, the Cleveland-based, 17-store chain of supermarkets, says representatives from his stores make periodic visits to the sources of their beef, which they market as free of antibiotics and hormones.

"We look at how they treat their animals as well as process [them]," says Heinen. Heinen's does not purchase from Westland/Hallmark, the California-based company involved in the most recent recall, but from smaller processors: Meyer Natural Angus of Helmville, Mont., and PM Beef of Windom, Minn.

"There isn't a big secret when you go through a plant, whether they're doing things right. Because it's so important to their track record, and their profit," Heinen says.

Kimberly Pupillo, a Giant Eagle spokeswoman, says in an e-mail that the chain did not buy any of the recalled meat. In a separate e-mail exchange, Dan Donovan, another Giant Eagle spokesman, states:

"As a retailer, we work only with suppliers who demonstrate a track record of food safety and adherence to and/or outperformance of all USDA guidelines."

## **F) CALIFORNIA: Hallmark/Westland likely to close permanently**

25.feb.08

Meatingplace.com

Alicia Karapetian

<http://www.meatingplace.com/MembersOnly/webNews/details.aspx?item=19894>

Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Co., which last week issued the record-breaking 143-million-pound beef recall, will likely close permanently, the Chino, Calif.-based processor's general manager told the Wall

Street Journal.

Hallmark/Westland, which temporarily shuttered operations per USDA request following the discovery of a video showing employees abusing downer cattle, would be allowed to reopen if it met certain conditions outlined by USDA.

General Manager Anthony Madigow doubted that would happen. "I don't see any way we could reopen," he told the Journal. "We are a small private company."

Cash flow has become an issue for the processor as some customers have stopped payment for product that was among the 143 million recalled pounds, Madigow said.

What's more, government officials last week said Hallmark/Westland would be required to pay costs associated with destroying and replacing meat supplied to the National School Lunch Program.

"If the USDA wants payment back, we're dead meat," Madigow said. "We're done. There's no way we could pay it all back."

Madigow also told the Journal that some 250 workers have already been laid off, and only a small group of managers remain at the company to manage the recall.

### **G) OP-ED: Inspect the system**

25.feb.08

The Arizona Republic

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/opinions/articles/0225mon1-25.html>

People bite into their hamburgers with some simple expectations.

(1) They believe the food is safe.

(2) They assume the animal that produced the meat was treated humanely.

The recall of 143 million pounds of beef this week challenges those expectations.

(1) Federal food safety inspectors didn't find the problems; the Humane Society of the United States did.

(2) The animal-protection group's surreptitiously filmed video shows workers abusing non-ambulatory animals in an effort to get them onto their feet for slaughter. Cows too weak to stand were kicked, smacked in the eye with a paddle and shocked repeatedly. Some were taken to slaughter by forklift.

(3) Federal regulations ban most "downer" cows from the food supply because an animal that is too sick to walk is more likely to carry mad-cow disease or other contamination. Inspectors should have excluded these animals from the slaughter. But, according to society investigators, inspections were done on a set schedule. That meant violations could take place when no one was watching.

What's more, the federal law banning downer cattle has huge loopholes, says Wayne Pacelle, president of the society. It does not even cover downer pigs, sheep or goats, although two proposals in Congress, S 394 and HR 661, cover these animals.

The editorial goes on to say the idea of using pain to try to rouse an animal that is so weak it wallows in its own feces is not just ethically offensive. Downer cows spread feces to other carcasses in the slaughtering process, and they are more likely to be infected with mad-cow disease. According to the CDC, one hamburger can include the meat of hundreds of cows, so one downer cow can have a huge impact.

### **H) UK: Foot and mouth costs farmers 21m**

27.feb.08

News Wales

<http://www.newswales.co.uk/?section=Agriculture&F=1&id=13429><http://www.newswales.co.uk/?section=Agriculture&F=1&id=13429>

Figures suggesting, according to this story, a massive drop in livestock farm incomes released by the Welsh Assembly Government today highlight the impact of last year's foot and mouth disease crisis and can be laid fairly and squarely at Westminster's door, the Farmers' Union of Wales president said.

"These new estimates forecast Welsh hill farm incomes will decrease by a massive 31 per cent, while lowland farm incomes will see a 14 per cent fall," Gareth Vaughan was quoted as saying, adding, "The FMD virus escaped from Government licensed laboratories and they should fully compensate the losses that these dramatic figures reflect."

### **I) MINNESOTA: Officials: Not quite a bovine TB 'outbreak'**

28.feb.08

Red Orbit

[http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/1273814/officials\\_not\\_quite\\_outbreak/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/1273814/officials_not_quite_outbreak/)

Minnesota animal health officials are, according to this story, hoping to persuade federal authorities to define the area where bovine tuberculosis has been found in 11 cattle herds as a relatively small region. This week, state and federal animal health experts, led by Bill Hartmann, state veterinarian and executive director of the state Board of Animal Health, spoke to cattle owners at four meetings across the state. A fifth meeting, in Pipestone, Minn., had to be canceled because of bad weather.

Wednesday morning, about 250 livestock owners crowded into the theater at Northland Community and Technical College to get the latest news. Just 10 days ago, an 11th herd was found to include animals infected with TB. Because that was the fourth herd since October to be found with TB-infected animals, it triggered a regulation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to lower the state's TB-status. And that will cost cattle producers in testing and marketing restrictions, Hartmann was cited as telling them.

But there's some good news since TB first was discovered in a herd near Skime, Minn., north of here, in early 2005, Hartmann said.

The 11 herds that each include at least one animal that tested positive for TB are in a relatively small area, along a straight line stretching from a few miles north of Salol, Minn., in north central Roseau County, to about 34 miles south to a mile or so beyond Grygla, Minn., in northwestern Beltrami County. And it's an even smaller area within that locus where 17 wild deer have been found, in the past three years, with TB infection. So, it's not quite accurate to refer to this as an "outbreak," of TB, Hartmann emphasized after the meeting Wednesday, because two years and more of testing has shown the disease hasn't "broken out," or been found anywhere else in Minnesota.

The story goes on to say that the effects of finding TB in the 11 herds already are being felt.

Just a week ago, North Dakota animal health officials ruled that any cattle -- or bison, goats or deer or elk -- being transported from Minnesota into North Dakota must first be tested and shown to be TB-free.

The North Dakota rule is slightly stricter than the expected USDA ruling -- coming perhaps in a week or two -- that will downgrade Minnesota's TB status from "modified accredited advanced (MAA) to "modified accredited," or MA.

## **J) COPENHAGEN: Foot-and-mouth fears shut down slaughterhouse**

27.feb.08

IOL

AFP

[http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=117&art\\_id=nw20080227160019659C561229](http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=117&art_id=nw20080227160019659C561229)

Danish veterinary authorities on were cited in this story as saying Wednesday that they had temporarily closed a slaughterhouse near Copenhagen over fears that a pig due to be killed was infected with foot-and-mouth disease.

A pig sent to the slaughterhouse in Ringsted, some 60 kilometres southwest of Copenhagen, had shown signs of the disease, the Veterinary and Food Administration was cited as saying in a statement.

The animal and the farm it came from were to be examined by authorities to confirm whether it was indeed a case of the highly contagious viral disease that can affect all cloven-footed animals.

## **K) UK: Call for regular testing in dairy and beef herds as survey reveals rise in BVD and IBR levels**

26.feb.08

Farmers Guardian

<http://www.farmersguardian.com/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=16628&c=1>

Three subsidised services from Intervet Animal Health have, according to this story, highlighted issues within UK dairy and beef herds.

DairyCheck and BeefCheck (bulk milk and blood testing schemes) have revealed another rise in herds testing positive for BVD and IBR, while the Cephaguard scheme (milk testing) has confirmed the role *Strep.uberis* is playing in causing mastitis.

Some 90 per cent of dairy herds had been exposed to BVD and 70 per cent to IBR. Of the beef animals tested, 38 per cent had recently been exposed to BVD infection and 33 per cent had come into contact

with IBR.

Intervet's large animal veterinary adviser Rosemary Booth was cited as saying that, while the figures were just a snapshot of the national herd, they indicated both diseases were so common, many herds were experiencing a drain on production and profits.

Meanwhile, the Cephaguard scheme showed Strep.uberis was responsible for 23 per cent of mastitis cases and 18 per cent of high cell counts, ahead of Staph.aureus and E.coli.

Ms Booth was quoted as saying, "Winter housing inevitably brings a higher environmental exposure, particularly for loose housed herds. This is why doing some bacteriology testing is so important to know what you are dealing with.

"Once indoors, the risk of toxic E.coli mastitis also increases as some herds start winter calving and contamination builds up in bedding."

#### **L) UK: Date for bluetongue movement restriction**

26.feb.08

Western Mail

Steve Dube

<http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/countryside-farming-news/farming-news/2008/02/26/date-for-bluetongue-movement-restriction-91466-20522710/>

Farmers are, according to this story, being urged to return any livestock to bluetongue-free areas before March 15.

The warning follows the announcement that the vector-free period, when the disease-carrying midges are inactive, ends at midnight on March 14.

NFU Cymru president, Dai Davies was cited as saying it marks the end of any chance get stock back to the unrestricted areas of Wales from the disease surveillance zone until probably the end of the year or until a vaccine is available.

The vector-free period was announced on December 21. Once it is over, livestock will only be able to move out of the disease zones to slaughter at approved abattoirs.

The decision by Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government to bring an end to the vector-free period is based on an assessment of meteorological data and historic vector midge trapping, which provides evidence that the midges will re-emerge at around this time.

#### **M) CANADA: BSE Case Confirmed In Alberta**

26.feb.08

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/bseesb/ab2008/12notavie.shtml>

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has confirmed bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a six-year-old dairy cow from Alberta. The animal's carcass is under CFIA control, and no part of it entered the human food or animal feed systems.

The age and location of the infected animal are consistent with previous cases detected in Canada. This case will not affect Canada's Controlled Risk country status, as recognized by the World Organization for Animal Health. This status clearly acknowledges the effectiveness of Canada's surveillance, risk mitigation and eradication measures. Based on science, it is not expected that this case should impact access to any of Canada's current international markets for cattle and beef.

As Canada progresses toward the eradication of BSE, the periodic detection of a small number of cases is fully expected. Canada's BSE surveillance program, which targets the highest risk animals and regions, continues to benefit from very strong producer participation. At the same time, Canada's animal and human health safeguards prevent potentially harmful cattle tissues from entering the human food and animal feed systems.

An epidemiological investigation directed by international guidelines is underway to identify the animal's herd mates at the time of birth and potential pathways by which it might have become infected. Once completed, a report on the investigation will be publicly released.

#### **N) R-CALF: CANADA continues to detect BSE in younger cattle**

26.feb.08

From a press release

Billings, Montana -- Today, the Canadian Food Inspection Service (CFIA) announced the detection of the 14th case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) so far detected in Canada. CFIA reported that the infected animal was a 6-year-old dairy cow from Alberta, Canada, which would mean she was born in 2002.

In an effort to convince the public that Europe is gaining control over its BSE epidemic, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) points to the reduction in the number of BSE-infected cattle born after the United Kingdom's feed ban. USDA also insists that Canada's BSE problem has likewise been decreasing since implementation of its feed ban. In Canada, however, just the opposite is happening. This latest case – the 13th case detected in a Canadian-born cow and the 14th case when Canada's 1993 imported case is included – also is the seventh case born after Canada implemented its 1997 ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban, and its sixth case born after the export eligibility date of March 1, 1999, set by USDA.

Canada has detected more BSE cases born after its feed ban than were born before. Additionally, these cases born after the feed ban are relatively young animals, suggesting they have been subjected to higher doses of infectivity, accounting for the shorter incubation period of the disease, which is known to extend beyond eight years.

"At some point, Congress and the public need to realize that the emperor has no clothes," said R-CALF USA President/Region VI Director Max Thornsberry, a Missouri veterinarian. "USDA is ignoring science by dismissing the empirical evidence that shows Canada's BSE problem has worsened beyond anyone's expectations, and Canada's cattle herd represents a significant risk to the United States."

Because today's case was reportedly born after March 1, 1999, USDA's new OTM (over-30-month) Rule – put into effect by the agency on Nov. 19, 2007 – would have allowed this cow to be imported into the U.S. before she began to exhibit clinical signs of BSE.

"It is a near certainty that the U.S. will import BSE-infected cattle from Canada under the OTM Rule, and that these cattle will continue to incubate the disease right here in the USA," Thornsberry pointed out.

"And our government is not even testing these high-risk Canadian animals before they enter the U.S. food supply. I don't know how much more irresponsible you can get than what USDA is now doing."

R-CALF USA, along with 10 other plaintiffs, believes the public deserves more protection than that provided by USDA's relaxed import policies and is challenging USDA's OTM Rule in federal court. A hearing took place Feb. 19, 2008, regarding R-CALF USA's request for a preliminary injunction to suspend the OTM Rule until the court can complete its review of the entire lawsuit. At that hearing, U.S. District Judge Lawrence Piersol took the matter under advisement.

"In the wake of the largest beef recall in history, resulting over concerns for BSE, and extending for a two-year period, it should be clear to everyone that USDA is not following science and is not adequately protecting the integrity of the U.S. beef supply," Thornsberry emphasized. "We implore Congress to take immediate measures to prevent the inevitable – the importation of BSE-infected cattle into the United States from Canada."

## **O) US: Brucellosis in cattle; research facilities**

26.feb.08

Federal Register: February 26, 2008 (Volume 73, Number 38)

Page 10137-10138

DOCID:fr26fe08-3

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: We are amending brucellosis regulations by providing an exception in the definition of herd for animals held within a federally approved brucellosis research facility, in order to facilitate research on brucellosis-exposed or infected animals in those facilities. Prior to this rule, such animals constituted a herd, and the presence of brucellosis-positive herds within a State can adversely affect that State's brucellosis classification. By providing an exception for brucellosis-exposed or infected animals held within federally approved research facilities, this rule will enable initiation of necessary brucellosis research in Class Free States.

**P) K-STATE: Researchers collaborate to find new vaccine technology decreases E. coli in beef cattle**

26.feb.08

From a press release

Despite millions of dollars spent on food safety research over the last 10 years, ground beef recalls due to E. coli O157:H7 were higher in 2007 than in 2006, according to researchers from Kansas State University and West Texas A&M University. E. coli O157:H7 has been linked to foodborne illnesses in humans after consuming contaminated beef and produce.

"We have been studying the effects of a novel vaccine technology to make beef safer," said Dr. Dan Thomson, an associate professor at Kansas State University.

Thomson worked with Dr. Guy Loneragan, West Texas A&M University, and Dr. T.G. Nagaraja, of K-State, to examine the effects of this vaccine on its ability to decrease E. coli shedding in beef cattle.

"We had a decrease in cattle shedding E. coli by 54 percent in our first field study," Thomson said.

"However, we increased the amount of SRP exposure in the second field study and decreased the rate of cattle shedding E. coli by 85 percent."

Loneragan said, "This tells us that efficacious interventions that predictably reduce the burden of E. coli O157 on cattle entering packing plants are needed. Successful interventions will reduce the burden of E. coli O157 to a level that is within the capacity of in-plant interventions to handle. If this can be achieved, then tremendous progress toward preventing E. coli O157 from ever getting into ground beef has been made. This vaccine appears to fit this purpose and has great promise."

The team's findings will be presented at the 2008 Beef Industry Safety Summit in Dallas March 5.

Thomson and his colleagues studied Siderophore receptor and porin -- SRP -- technology, which was developed by EpiTopix, LLC in Willmar, Minn.

"Siderophore receptor and porin proteins are utilized by food borne pathogens like E. coli to acquire iron," Thomson said. "The SRP vaccine technology immunizes animals against these mechanisms and does not allow the bacteria to take up iron. Iron is to bacteria, as oxygen is to humans. Without iron consumption, the bacteria suffocate and can't grow or replicate."

"We conducted a challenge study, a natural infection study and two large pen field studies at commercial feedyards," Thomson said. "All studies showed positive results of this vaccine, making an impact on decreasing not only the number of the cattle shedding the bacteria but also decreasing the concentration of the bacteria being shed."

Super shedder cattle are cattle that shed E. coli in very high concentrations.

"Our natural field study showed that the SRP technology vaccine reduces the number of super shedder cattle," Thomson said.

The two large pen feeding studies the team conducted utilized 20 pens and more than 1,200 head of cattle, Thomson said. The first study conducted in 2006 was funded in part by beef and veal producers and importers through their \$1-per-head checkoff and was produced for the Cattlemen's Beef Board and state beef councils by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. The second study was sponsored by EpiTopix, LLC in 2007.

**Q) OTTAWA: Canada confirms new case of mad cow disease**

26.feb.08

Reuters

<http://www.thestar.com/Business/article/307009>

OTTAWA -- Canada has, according to this story, confirmed a new case of mad cow disease Tuesday, the 12th since 2003, and said the animal in question was a six-year-old dairy cow from Alberta.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency said no part of the animal's carcass had entered the human or animal food supply.

"This case will not affect Canada's Controlled Risk country status, as recognized by the World Organization for Animal Health," the CFIA was quoted as saying in a statement.

The organization said last May it was classifying Canada and the United States as controlled risk, which signified it was happy with both countries' efforts to combat bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), known as mad cow disease.

"Based on science, it is not expected that this case should impact access to any of Canada's current

international markets for cattle and beef," the CFIA said.

Canada generally has blamed contaminated feed for its cases of mad cow disease.

The cow was born after Canada and the United States introduced a ban in 1997 on cattle feed that contained ingredients made from rendered cattle and other ruminants.

Canada has now also banned risk material from all types of livestock feed in an effort to eliminate BSE from Canada's herd within 10 years. Until then, the CFIA said it expected to find a few cases of BSE.

## **R) UK foot-and-mouth free**

25.feb.08

Farmers Guardian

<http://www.farmersguardian.com/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=16599&c=1>

THE World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) has, according to this story, granted the UK foot-and-mouth disease free status.

The UK has regained freedom from FMD without vaccination, following a three month disease free period.

No cases of FMD have emerged since 30 September 2007 and Defra presented the case for disease freedom to the OIE on December 31.

The disease free status is the next step to the UK being able to export to countries outside of the EU after intra EU trade recommenced on December 31.

## **S) COLORADO: Sustainable fuel? Researchers question whether ethanol byproduct taints cattle, meat**

23.feb.08

The Coloradoan

Hallie Woods

<http://www.coloradoan.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080223/UPDATES01/80223006>

As ethanol production increases, some researchers are, according to this story, questioning the effect the alternative fuel's byproduct grains have on cattle and the safety and quality of beef.

Distillers grain, the leftovers from producing corn ethanol, has been linked to a 50 percent increase in E. coli when fed to cattle, according to a recent Kansas State University study that looked at dried distiller's grains.

With approximately 10 million tons of distillers grains produced nationally in 2006 and 16 million tons expected by 2010, according to an Ohio State University study, the ethanol byproduct is being marketed to feedlots and dairy farms across the United States as a source of revenue for ethanol plants.

"It has just blown up so quickly," Shawn Archibeque, an assistant professor of animal science at Colorado State University was quoted as saying, "Seventy-five to 80 percent of the distillers grains are being fed to dairy and beef cattle."

But while some researchers and cattle ranchers maintain that the product can be a good source of nutrients when rationed with other cattle feeds, agricultural researchers are looking at a variety of effects the product could have on meat, cattle health and the environment.

Increased sulfur in the distillers grains comes from adding sulfur to the ethanol machines, Archibeque was cited as saying. High levels of sulfur can cause sulfur toxicity in cattle.

While that doesn't taint meat, cattle suffer neurological damage that causes the animals to ram their heads into the wall, stare up at the sky, and, if not treated, die.

The story goes on to say that researchers are also looking at the marbling quality of meat and how the fat levels can decrease or change with the introduction of certain levels of distillers grains to the diet.

Decreased levels in dairy fat are also a potential concern, driving down the worth of the product.

To solve those problems, researchers are trying to find the right blend of distillers grain and regular grain.

Some of that research is going on at a CSU research feedlot in Lamar.

## **T) MEXICO to allow imports of Canada dairy cows, cattle next month**

23.feb.08

Bloomberg.com

Andres R. Martinez

[http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601082&sid=aVcpg8d\\_5hiU&refer=canada](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601082&sid=aVcpg8d_5hiU&refer=canada)

Mexico will, according to this story, begin importing dairy cows and cattle from Canada next month after lifting a five-year-old ban from that country because of mad cow disease.

Mexican farmers will be able to import livestock that is younger than 30 months and doesn't come from any of the farms where mad cow disease was reported in Canada, Mexico's agriculture ministry said in e-mailed statement.

The price of milk in Mexico has risen 6.2 percent since June to 10.70 pesos a liter yesterday, according to the Agriculture Ministry Web site. The new dairy cows will help Mexican farmers increase production of milk.

#### **U) CALIFORNIA: Beef recall affects trade negotiations**

23.feb.08

Associated Press

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/business/AP-Slaughterhouse-Abuse.html>

MONTEREY, Calif. -- U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer was cited as saying in this story that he wants to wait to see the results of an investigation into the nation's largest beef recall before making any policy changes, but he acknowledged that the debacle has delayed negotiations to ship U.S. beef to Japan and South Korea.

Those markets closed to the U.S. cattle industry in 2003 after a scare over mad cow disease.

Speaking before meat packers and processors, Schafer was cited as saying the Westland/Hallmark Meat Co. recall announced earlier this week had already prompted diplomats to ask why the U.S. can't produce safe meat.

"As people look for reasons to protect their own market places ... they say you can't even send us safe meat," he was quoted as saying, adding, "Do we need to issue new regulations and things? Right now we're just not prepared to do that."

The story goes on to say that Schafer said Friday he didn't want to make immediate changes to meat inspection regulations until the recall investigation showed who was responsible for the lapse in food safety.

He also rejected charges that chronic staff shortages among inspectors were endangering the public by allowing sick cows to get into the nation's food supply, and said the USDA meat inspection system was intact.

#### **V) UK: How now, downer cow?**

22.feb.08

Guardian Unlimited

Tom Philpott

[http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/tom\\_philpott/2008/02/how\\_now\\_downer\\_cow.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/tom_philpott/2008/02/how_now_downer_cow.html)

Philpott asks in this column, What are the chances of finding meat from a "downer cow" in your next Big Mac?

The question is worth asking, given that the US department of agriculture (USDA) recently imposed the biggest meat recall in US history on the California beef packer Westland/Hallmark for defying the rules on handling downers (defined as animals that are too ill or injured to walk). Under US code, such cows have to be checked by a USDA veterinarian before their meat can enter the food supply.

At the Westland/Hallmark plant, workers were caught on videotape flouting the downer rule - using violent means to compel sick animals to stagger to slaughter and into the food supply, without consulting vets.

But don't worry about that Big Mac, the USDA says. The California situation amounts to an "aberration", an agency official recently claimed. The beef industry concurs. A spokesman for the National Cattleman's Beef Association assured the public that animal welfare lies at the "heart and soul of our operations".

The Philpott goes on to say that on examination, these one-bad-apple claims look shaky. The practice of torturing severely sick cows and mixing their meat into the food supply dates to the origins of industrial meat production in the 19th century. Upton Sinclair memorably documented the practice in his 1906 meat-industry exposé *The Jungle*.

In our time, evidence abounds that the practice still thrives. To wit:

- The USDA itself did not uncover the Westland/Hallmark violations - an undercover campaigner for the Humane Society of the United States did, and went public with the videotape. In fact, Westland/Hallmark claims that USDA officials regularly monitored the kill line.

"A fulltime USDA veterinary medical officer has been assigned to our facility for many years, and he oversees the work of three inspectors in the harvest operation and another inspector assigned to the processing operations," according to a company statement.

Hmmm. If five USDA officials working at Westland/Hallmark missed the atrocities and violations there, can we count on the agency to do better at the nation's other large-scale slaughterhouses?

- By the USDA's own reckoning, its system for keeping downers out of the food supply is porous. A 2006 audit report [PDF] by the USDA's Office of the Inspector General found "inconsistent application of procedures for slaughter of nonambulatory cattle (downers)". The study randomly selected 12 slaughterhouses. Over the span of nine months, the auditors found that two of the facilities had slaughtered 20 downer cows without following proper procedures.

- In one documented case, USDA inspectors accepted bribes to look the other way while slaughterhouse workers abused animals. "An internal report from the Agriculture Department has found that one of the nation's leading kosher slaughterhouses violated animal cruelty laws and that government inspectors not only failed to stop the inhumane practices but also took improper gifts of meat from plant managers," the New York Times reported in 2006.

Thus the dodgy dealings at the California slaughterhouse appear to be fairly common practice, not the "aberration" trumpeted by the USDA and the meat industry.

The question then becomes, what tempts meat packers to take the risk of forcing downers into the food supply? The answer may lie in business conditions within the industry. Today, four giant entities [PDF] - Tyson, Cargill, Swift and National Beef Packing - slaughter 83.5% of cows in the United States. And industry consolidation has risen steadily. In 1990, the four largest firms controlled 72% of the market. Thus even an industrial-scale beef packer like Westland/Hallmark is a sardine in a market dominated by great white sharks. Westland/Hallmark produces annual sales of \$100m. Sound like a lot? Well, beef king Tyson - which also ranks as the number-two player in poultry- and pork-packing markets - generates \$27bn in revenue each year. Agribusiness behemoth Cargill, by some reckonings the world's most valuable privately held company, boasts yearly sales of "\$75bn and growing".

Given such competition, a company like Westland/Hallmark faces tremendous pressure to keep costs down. According to a Los Angeles Times report, 40% of the company's annual revenue hails from a single account: its infamous contract to supply beef to the federal government for the National School Lunch Programme. Interestingly, the government bought beef from the company last year "at an average price of \$1.42 a pound," the LA Times reports.

Now, Westland/Hallmark is a privately held company, so it's impossible to know what kind of profit margins it generates from such transactions. But given the fierce competition it faces, as well as the sudden spike in feed prices last year, it's safe enough to assume that the company's profit margins were razor tight. Hence the motivation to clandestinely force downers through the kill line and their meat into school dining halls.

A true reckoning with mounting US meat-safety issues - in 2007, a startling surge in meat recalls occurred - probably means creating conditions of fair competition in the industry. According to antitrust theory, any market whose top-four players control more than 40% is concentrated; the dominant actors have tremendous leverage over price and siphon off the great bulk of profits.

Beef isn't the only market that easily counts as concentrated. The top four pork packers own 66% of that market. The numbers for chicken and turkey stand at 58.5% and 55%, respectively.

Under such conditions, we can expect the meat packers to continue seeing animals as industrial commodities that must be processed as cheaply as possible to maintain profitability. And we can expect more abuse - both of animals and of the safety of our food supply.

## **W) AUSTRALIA: Cattle have a beef, too**

24.feb.08

Sydney Morning Herald

Simon Webster

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/cattle-have-a-beef-too/2008/02/23/1203467457523.html>

Americans choked on their gherkins last week, writes Webster, at the news that authorities had ordered

the recall of 65,000 tonnes of beef following the release of an undercover video taken inside a Californian slaughterhouse.

That's two quarter-pounders for every person in the United States. In other words, they'd have to go without an entire breakfast.

Meat lovers were mightily relieved to discover most of the beef had already been eaten, making the recall somewhat impractical.

The video shows workers trying to make injured or diseased cattle stand up to be slaughtered. The cattle are rammed with a forklift truck, attacked with a high-pressure hose and hit in the face with a paddle. Two of the workers face animal cruelty charges.

As Paul McCartney once said: "If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be a vegetarian." He then ruined it by doing that really annoying whistling and raised-eyebrow thing.

Webster goes on to say that Australia is BSE-free. Anyone who so much as watched an episode of The Bill in the 1980s is not allowed to give blood here and moves are afoot to make people who have actually visited Britain wear a bell so they can be easily identified and have rotten fruit thrown at them.

An incident such as the US recall wouldn't happen in Australia, Dave Inall of the Cattle Council was quoted as saying "All animals ... are inspected for slaughter," he told the ABC.

The RSPCA acknowledges that Australian slaughterhouses have higher standards than those in the US. It seems if you're going to be slaughtered you may as well be slaughtered here, which will come as a huge consolation to the frenzied cattle frothing at the mouth as they wait amid the stench of blood and guts to get a bolt through the brain.

Webster goes on to say that it's a big call to expect everyone to become vegetarian. We didn't claw our way to the top of the food chain to eat lettuce, as the saying goes. But as we roam supermarket aisles and farmers' markets in search of sustenance, surely we can use our hunting and gathering instincts to track down free-range eggs and free-range pig products, at the very least.

In the words of Nobel Laureate author Isaac Bashevis Singer: "Various philosophers and religious leaders tried to convince their disciples and followers that animals are nothing more than machines without a soul, without feelings. However, anyone who has ever lived with an animal - be it a dog, a bird or even a mouse - knows that this theory is a brazen lie, invented to justify cruelty."

## **X) MINNESOTA TB outbreak causes ND to tighten cattle import regs**

22.feb.08

The Dickinson Press

Dale Wetzel

<http://www.thedickinsonpress.com/ap/index.cfm?page=view&id=D8UV3JIG0>

Responding to outbreaks of bovine tuberculosis in northwestern Minnesota, North Dakota regulators have, according to this story, ordered tougher testing requirements on Minnesota cattle before they may be brought across the border.

The Board of Animal Health ordered the new rules to take effect immediately on Thursday. Minnesota's state veterinarian, Bill Hartmann, was cited as saying he expected the U.S. Agriculture Department to impose new restrictions on movement of Minnesota cattle, but he said he did not know when they would be imposed.

North Dakota's state veterinarian, Susan Keller, was cited as saying she believed North Dakota should adopt tougher rules right away, without waiting for federal action. The state has been tuberculosis-free since 1976, and a change in that status would be devastating to ranchers, she said.

Cattle producers "assume, I think, that we're doing the right thing on behalf of the industry," Keller was quoted as saying, adding, "If we hold back on requirements that we know are going to go into place, I'd rather not get static from the person who ends up with TB in this state, than get static from somebody who has to pay for some additional testing."

The detailed regulations apply to cattle, bison, goats, llamas, deer and elk that are raised on farms. They require more frequent testing of animals before they may be brought into North Dakota.

Under the new rules, individual cattle, bison, llamas, alpacas and goats must have a negative TB test within 60 days before they are shipped, and they must come from a herd that had a negative TB test within a year. For farmed deer and elk, the individual negative TB test may be within 90 days of shipment.



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If you would like to post your cattle industry news or event, send your information by Thursday at 4pm to [lianne@cattle.guelph.on.ca](mailto:lianne@cattle.guelph.on.ca) or submit through the OCA Web site:  
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