



OCA Weekly Update – July 11, 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:

Register Now for the 2008 Cow/Calf Road Show!

September 8, 2008

- 12:30pm Meet at Keady Livestock
1pm Board the bus and depart to the farm of Steve Eby
Steve is a provincial grazing mentor. We will be discussing how, why and most important the dollars of making pastures work for us. We will also discuss extending the grazing season with other crops or residues for cows or backgrounding.
4:30pm Board bus and depart for Keady Community Centre
5:30pm Ontario Corn Fed Beef BBQ
7:00pm Keady Livestock Demonstration
This is a chance to watch the professionals walk us through sorting decisions at a sale barn with actual cattle. They will discuss and suggest effective cattle marketing skills. Dr. Rob Bell and Dr. Peter Kotzeff will highlight their vaccination programs and the success observed in sales and in the health of cattle in the feedlot.
9:00pm Depart Keady for Owen Sound Days Inn
10:00pm Hospitality Suite

September 9, 2008

- 7:30am Sponsor Breakfast and Networking at the Days Inn
8:30am Speakers
This will be an opportunity to hear from a number of speakers ranging in topic from age verification, verified beef production, Agristability, the new Herdlink, and much more.
11:30pm Board bus and depart for lunch at the farm of Ross Laycock
1:00pm Board bus and depart for the farm of John Saunders
John operates a purebred Charolais farm with his sons Brent and Darrell. They sell Charolais bulls and are members of the Georgian Bay Charolais Calf Club.
5:00pm Conclusion of event

* Please note agenda is subject to change.

This exciting event is limited to 100 serious producers from across the province. For a registration form please contact the OCA office at 1-866-370-2333.

CFA Tripartite Roundtable: Farm Leaders, National and Provincial Agriculture Ministers Convene in Quebec City

QUEBEC CITY—Farm leaders from across the country held a productive meeting with national and provincial agriculture ministers yesterday as the ministers began their annual summer meeting to discuss the governments' overarching new national policy framework, known as Growing Forward.

"The Roundtable resulted in a candid discussion between farm leaders and national and provincial agriculture ministers and deputy ministers. We are pleased to have had an open dialogue around the program components proposed under Growing Forward," said Bob Friesen, President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA).

In their discussions with ministers, farm leaders expressed support for the proposed framework's overall correlation between competitiveness and innovation. They also expressed concern and made suggestions around several key issues that will be central to the next generation of agriculture policy. These included the need for a 'flexible' approach—as described in CFA's AgriFlex proposal—which would allow for the development of regional solutions and commodity-specific programs; and further attention to the livestock sector crisis. Industry leaders highlighted the importance of having production insurance programs for all commodities and the role of cooperatives. They stressed the need for a smooth transition from the existing Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) to the new Growing Forward programs, and voiced real concern over the governments' recent decision to reduce on-farm food safety program funding by 40 percent during this critical transition year.

In addition to the points on the Growing Forward framework, the farm leaders raised concerns on potential changes to Canada's Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT), and called on ministers to hold a fulsome consultation with industry prior to considering any changes to the AIT.

With more than 40 participants, the 8th annual Tripartite Roundtable offered a valuable exchange of perspectives, representing all regions of Canada. CFA is pleased by the participation and the level of importance ministers continue to attach to this informal forum. However, CFA members were disappointed that ministers and government officials from Alberta and Saskatchewan were unable to attend. Farm leaders representing these provinces will follow-up with their provincial governments to ensure that they are aware of the discussion held between industry representatives and other ministers.

Looking ahead, CFA and its members remain committed to collaborating with governments to further refine the details of programs related to the new Growing Forward framework.

Minister Ritz Standing Strong for Canadian Agriculture

OTTAWA, Ontario, July 10, 2008 – Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz today issued the following statement in response to the release of a revised draft modalities text on agriculture by Crawford Falconer, Chair of the World Trade Organization agriculture negotiations.

"The Conservative Government is standing up for Canadian farm families at the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in Geneva. We are working hard to deliver a balanced WTO agreement that benefits all Canadian farm families by protecting our supply managed sectors and creating new opportunities for exporters.

"The Government of Canada is committed to the WTO process. However, as Ambassador Falconer's latest text makes clear, there is still much work to be done to resolve outstanding issues. Wide gaps continue to separate many countries' negotiating positions. Each country will have to ratify any agreement and that will be complex as key players go through elections. The reality is that an agreement in Geneva would be only one step in a long process of ratification, detailed negotiation, and gradual implementation. Canada will work together with other WTO members at the forthcoming WTO meeting of Ministers in Geneva in an effort to move the negotiations forward. An agreement on modalities would not be a final conclusion, but one more step in the process.

"Canada is working hard to level the international playing field and create new international opportunities for farm families and all exporters. Canada will continue to push all countries to

completely eliminate export subsidies and strengthen disciplines for domestic supports. The Conservative Government is committed to opening and expanding markets for our exporters.

"Canada continues to stand strong for our supply managed sectors. We firmly oppose proposals for any over quota tariff cuts or tariff quota expansion for sensitive products. The Conservative Government is committed to supporting supply management both at home and abroad.

"All countries participating in the negotiation have a great deal of work to do if wide gaps are to be bridged and an agreement is to be achieved. Canada is committed to doing its part and we will continue to work hard to move WTO negotiations forward."

WTO Proposal on Agriculture Essential to Future of Canadian Farmers

July 10, 2008 A revised proposal on how to reduce tariffs and subsidies for agriculture released today by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Agriculture is a step closer to an agreement that is essential to the future of Canadian farmers and processors of agricultural products, says the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA), a coalition of national and regional organizations, associations and companies that support a more open and fair international trading environment for agriculture and agri-food. Over 90 per cent of Canadian farmers are dependent on international markets.

"CAFTA is pleased to see that the draft released today continues to call for ambitious reductions of barriers to agriculture trade, including so-called sensitive products," says Darcy Davis, President of CAFTA. "In the rest of the world, sensitive products are largely meat and grains, which are the most important agricultural goods produced in Canada and exported. Any lowering of ambition on sensitive products would be a major loss for Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. CAFTA is continuing to urge Canadian political leaders to support lowering of tariffs and expansion of quotas on sensitive products to ensure commercially meaningful market access gains for all Canadian agri-food products. We will be carrying that message to the WTO meetings in Geneva next week"

Davis adds that failure to reach an agreement at the WTO would be extremely costly. An independent analysis carried out by the George Morris Centre confirmed that new WTO rules as currently being negotiated would add an additional \$3 Billion per year to Canadian agricultural exports. This means that for each day without a new WTO agreement, there is a loss of roughly \$10 million in potential additional exports for Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry.

"Canadian farmers continue to struggle with adverse economic conditions," says Davis. "Canada is a trade dependent nation. One in every three Canadian jobs depends on trade, and we're the fourth largest agriculture and agri-food exporter in the world. Reaching an agreement at the WTO that will give Canada greater access to world markets is clearly in the best interests of the majority of Canadian producers and processors."

For the complete text of the WTO's revised proposal visit http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/markacc_e/markacc_chair_texts07_e.htm

How Young People Enter Agriculture and Establish Farm Enterprises: Call for volunteers!

A farm-entry doctoral research in collaboration with the University of Guelph is seeking participants for interviews. I am looking to interview young farmers in Grey and Wellington Counties, under the age of 40, who have started farming in the last 4-8 years.

The overall goal of this project is to:

- Detail the entry processes for young farmers who want to farm; including the barriers, challenges and opportunities for support; and
- To identify innovative thinking of new farmers by examining the ideas and practices of new entrants and their established enterprises.

The results of this research will go towards creating recommendations for future young farmer programmes in Ontario and is part of a larger comparative study involving young farmers in Spain.

It will only take around one hour and I can come to the farm or we can arrange to meet at a location near-by. I'm based at the University of Guelph and will undertake the Ontario survey in June, July and August 2008.

I know that this is a busy time for farmers. So, if you can help with this important project or you would like to know more about the research, please contact me.

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**The OCA Market Development Partnership Program
is accepting 2008 Letters of Intent until July 14th 2008**

The OCA Market Development Partnership Program is phase two of the Regional Marketing Initiative to support producers in their development of a gate to plate or value chain strategy. The objective of the program is to support Ontario beef producers and processors with a regional/local marketing process that will assist them in developing their gate to plate, value chain strategy, and provide them with options in the marketing of their products.

Projects that will be considered for funding should follow the below priorities:

- Should complement, not duplicate other market support programs
- This program specifically applies to beef production and marketing. Fed, OTM and dairy culls are included
- Limit marketing support to domestic markets only, not export initiatives
- Projects that focus on increasing carcass values shall be encouraged
- Program will not support normal business
- Capital costs will be considered if strong rationale is provided

The Market Development Partnership Program will require a minimum 25% investment into any eligible project. In-kind for non-profit organizations will be considered. Normally, payments will be made on a reimbursement basis only. However, depending on the size of the applicant, and the project, the committee may consider advancing funds to start the project.

A letter of intent to OCA is the initial step in the application process for the Market Development Partnership Program. The purpose of the letter is to begin the information exchange between the applicant and the funding body so as to provide the screening committee with sufficient information to determine the suitability of the project and to provide the applicant with a quick assessment of the eligibility of the project for the fund before compiling a full application.

For more information on application guidelines and a letter of intent template go to our Web site at: <http://www.cattle.guelph.on.ca/market-development/index.asp>

Environmental Farm Plan Update

Environmental Cost-Share Opportunities for Farmers for 2008

The voluntary cost-share programs available are generally a continuation of programs offered through the Agricultural Policy Framework from April 2005 through March 2008. To provide some program stability and smooth transition while new initiatives are developed through Growing Forward [the new agricultural policy framework] the programs will be offered in 2008 only. All approved projects must be completed and operational by December 15, 2008 to make a claim.

Ontario producers with an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Third Edition deemed appropriate through peer review may be eligible to apply for cost-share programs to implement environmental projects identified in their EFP action plans.

Complete programs details are available on-line at http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/User/Docs/Programs/PEG_Final_2008.pdf or by contacting: Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association – Guelph Office: 1-800-265-9751

Cattle Factsheet: 2008-09 Regular Advance Payment Program

Program Facts

- This Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada program features up to \$100,000 in interest-free loans.
- The program is administered in Ontario by ACC Farmers' Financial.
- The first \$100,000 is interest-free.
- An additional \$300,000 is available at prime – 1/4%.
- Producers must participate in CAIS/AGRISTABILITY

How Is Advance Payment Calculated?

Advances (loans) are based on number of animals you currently have on your farm X expected market weight of animals X \$45.75 per cwt.

Example:

If you currently have 200 animals (regardless of growth stage) on your farm that you plan to market at 1,250 pounds, your advance would be calculated as:

$$200 \text{ cattle} \times 12.50 \text{ cwt} \times \$45.75 \text{ per cwt} = \$114,375$$

When Are Advances Issued?

Advances may be issued between April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009. Since ACC Farmers' Financial receives a 98% guarantee from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, there is a 2% holdback. So for a \$100,000 advance, a cheque in the amount of \$97,500 is issued to the producer (\$100,000 less \$2,000 holdback, less \$500 administration fee). The administration fee includes costs for credit check, lien search, lien registration, and inspection charges.

How and When Are Advances Repaid?

Advances are repaid as cattle are sold. Repayment per head is based on total advance issued divided by number of animals. For example, a \$114,375 advance for 200 animals is repaid at \$571.88 per animal as animals are sold, plus any applicable interest for advances over \$100,000. Repayments are to be made by pre-authorized debit within ten business days after receipt of sales proceeds, or within 45 days of delivery to the buyer, whichever is earlier. Repayments must be accompanied by sales receipts. The final date for repayment is September 15, 2009; however repayments must be made earlier than September 15th as cattle are sold during the year.

Application Forms

Application forms are being mailed directly to cattle producers who participated or are participating in the 2007-08 program. New applicants can call ACC Farmers' Financial at 1-888-278-8807. Application forms are also available on the website at www.accfarmersfinancial.ca.

Major Changes from 2007-2008 Program

- Producers are not limited by the value of their CAIS/AGRISTABILITY reference margin for the amount of their advance.

- Producers do not have to use CAIS/AGRISTABILITY payments to repay the loans, unless in a default position.

Cattle Factsheet: 2008-09 Emergency Advance Payment Program

ACC emergency advance forms are available on the Web site (see below) now.

Program Facts

- This Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada program was announced in March 2008 due to the severe economic hardship in the cattle and hog sectors.
- Similar to the “Regular” Advance Payment Program, but has some significant differences (see below).
- Features up to \$100,000 in interest-free loans.
- An additional \$300,000 is available at prime – 1/4%
- The program is administered in Ontario by ACC Farmers’ Financial.
- Producers must participate in CAIS/AGRISTABILITY.

How Is Advance Payment Calculated?

- This is the first key difference between the Emergency Advance Payment Program and the Regular Advance Payment Program.
- The Regular Advance Payment Program advances (loans) are based on the number of animals you currently have on your farm X expected market weight of animals X \$45.75 per cwt.
- The Emergency Advance Payment Program advances (loans) are based on the expected number of animals to be produced over a 12 month period e.g. between April 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009 or June 1st to May 31st. (Note any advances issued in October 2008 or later on will not have 12 months remaining as the repayment deadline for all advances is September 15, 2009).

EXAMPLE:

If you currently have 200 animals (regardless of growth stage) on your farm that you plan to market at 1,250 pounds, plus you expect to have an additional 200 animals later in the year (before March 31, 2009) that you also plan to market at 1,250 pounds, your advance would be calculated as: 400 cattle X 12.50 cwt X \$45.75 per cwt = \$228,750

When Are Emergency Advances Issued?

Emergency advances may be issued between April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009. Using the example above, the advance can be issued at one time in the full amount of \$228,750.

The second key difference between the Emergency Advance Payment Program and the Regular Advance Payment Program is the guarantee level. ACC Farmers’ Financial receives a 100% guarantee from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. So there is no 2% holdback. For a \$100,000 advance a cheque in the amount \$99,500 is issued to the producer (\$100,000 less \$500 administration fee). The administration fee includes costs for credit checks, lien search, lien registration, and inspection charges.

How and When Are Emergency Advances Repaid?

This is the third key difference. Advances are repaid at the end of the twelve month period (or maximum of a twelve month period) by two installments (minimum of 50% for first installment). The first installment is due no later than 15 calendar days following the period of twelve months from the

date that the advance was issued. The second installment is due 30 calendar days following the first installment. However, all advances must be fully repaid no later than September 15, 2009.

Priority Agreements

Priority agreements with banks, credit unions or other creditors are not required. This is the fourth key difference. For Emergency Advances, the federal government takes secondary security to liens for loans already registered by banks, credit unions, and other creditors.

Application Forms

Application forms are being mailed directly to cattle producers who participated or are participating in the 2007-08 program. New applicants can call ACC Farmers' Financial at 1-888-278-8807. Application forms are also available on the website at www.accfarmersfinancial.ca.

Major Changes from 2007-2008 Program

- Producers are not limited by the value of their CAIS/AGRISTABILITY reference margin for the amount of their advance.
- Producers do not have to use CAIS/AGRISTABILITY payments to repay the loans, unless in a default position.

ACC Farmers Financial
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Guelph ON N1G 5L3
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Toll Free: 1-888-278-8807
Email: info@accfinancial.ca

Website: www.accfarmersfinancial.ca

Rural Program Connections Broadband Program

Rural Connections Broadband Program (Rural Connections) is a four year program designed to reduce broadband infrastructure gaps in rural southern Ontario. Broadband, also known as high-speed Internet, combines telecommunications infrastructure and service, allowing end-users to use the Internet at speeds far greater than traditional dial-up service allows.

The Rural Connections Program is part of the government's Digital Strategy for Ontario. Ontario's Digital Strategy outlines a plan for coordinating relevant government investments and for building partnerships between governments, the information and communications technology companies, Internet service providers, content creators, citizens and researchers to ensure Ontario can lead in the digital economy. Strategic investments in broadband infrastructure will continue to help rural communities foster partnerships and pursue innovative approaches to promote social and economic development, and improve access to government programs and services.

Rural municipalities in southern Ontario that meet the eligibility requirements can apply for provincial funding individually - or jointly with other municipalities through one lead applicant - for up to one third of eligible approved project costs to a maximum of \$1 million per application. Municipalities are responsible for securing the remaining project costs. The program requires municipalities to demonstrate they are working in partnership with community stakeholders and other partners to develop and implement a plan designed to improve broadband accessibility in rural areas.

Selected projects must also include a plan for long-term sustainability that addresses such components as uptake and utilization of the new infrastructure by residents, businesses and the community at large.

Objectives and Priorities

- Reduce broadband infrastructure gaps in rural southern Ontario.
- Enable small and medium size enterprises in rural southern Ontario to fully participate in the digital economy.
- Improve public access to government services and information.
- Support businesses and citizens to effectively utilize broadband for economic and social development.

Benefits

- Help make Ontario more productive, innovative, and competitive in the digital economy.
- Enable a diversified economy in rural communities that fosters entrepreneurship and enables the growth of small and medium enterprises.
- Enhance the quality of life of people in rural areas of southern Ontario through improved access to multi-level government information and services, education and skills training, health care, and community and global information resources.

Key Dates:

- Information on Intake One timelines and additional intakes will be available on the website.

BIC BITS

Nutricast Reaches Out to Health Professionals about Beef's Role in a Healthy Diet

The Beef Information Centre (BIC) continues to build a solid reputation among health professionals, and being a resource for these influencers positively impacts consumers' perceptions of beef as a healthy choice. Indeed, eating healthy is top of mind for consumers, with nutrition as the second most important attribute after taste (NPD, 2007).

The BIC's Nutricast presentations, delivered over the Internet, cover key health issues for registered dietitians, health educators, doctors and nurses. Nutricast programs are frequently co-sponsored by health organizations, such as the Canadian Diabetes Association, Dietitians of Canada, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, adding to the credibility and effectiveness of the presentations.

Most recently, the BIC hosted a Nutricast on the topic of protein and satiety. Satiety is the feeling of being satisfied after eating a certain food, like beef. This Nutricast was designed to help health professionals understand satiety and the role of protein in weight loss and appetite control.

Following the Nutricast, 54 per cent of survey respondents said the information will immediately change their practice or advice to patients. Ninety-four per cent of respondents described the information as new, interesting and relevant to their work, and 95 per cent said they would participate in a future seminar.

"This was an important topic for health professionals," says Carolyn Kallio, the BIC's nutrition program manager. "It was critical for them to learn about the latest research around protein and satiety, and to understand that beef can make their clients feel full longer. This assists their clients in reaching and maintaining a healthy body weight, and now health professionals can feel confident in recommending Canadian beef as a healthy choice."

The Nutricast was also supplemented by a new resource, the *Nutrition Perspective: The Satiating Power of Protein on Satiety*. This is one in a series of resources for health professionals on health issues that are important to Canadians. Each issue goes to 6000 health professionals and may be downloaded at www.beefinfo.org.

CAHRC Labour Market Survey Participants Needed

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) is coordinating a labour market survey. CAHRC is a national sector council funded through the Human Resource and Social

Development Canada (HRSDC). Their long term purpose is to fund Human Resource training. In order to develop training, you need to understand the needs of the industry and how best to service those needs.

The CAHRC is working with industry leaders, governments and education stakeholders to develop and implement programs and activities that will deal with the most pressing challenges.

For example:

- To alleviate labour shortages, the Council is creating tools and methods to attract and retain skilled workers.
- To improve access to training and skills development programs, the Council is ensuring leading-edge training is available and accessible across Canada. The Council is also working to ensure that agriculture employers and employees are aware of the value of (and need for) this training.
- To improve the image of agriculture as a profitable and fulfilling career, the Council is developing opportunities to promote the successes of agriculture businesses throughout the sector across Canada.

Farm employers with \$100,000 revenue or more are encouraged to participate. The survey is being conducted by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. To participate in the survey, contact Sheryl Yu at s.yu@malatest.com or (250) 384-2770.

Calling all Cattle Handlers!
Join us as Northumberland Cattlemen, OCA and OMAFRA present...

Dylan Biggs
from TK Ranch, Hanna, Alberta

Sat. July 12th

Codrington Hall/Homac Acres

A day of cattle handling skills, shown through lecture, video and actual cattle handling demonstrations.

- The definition and benefits of a manageable herd
- Understanding how our natural instincts can be counterproductive when working cows
- How to think like a cow-understanding why cows do what they do
- The building blocks for training your herd to be manageable
- The basic skills of good handling
- Where, when and how to pressure the flight zone of a herd or animal
- Understanding the dynamics of herding
- Demonstrations through video and cattle handling

Dylan and his family have been practicing low-stress handling for over 15 years on their Alberta Ranch. They run 300 cow-calf pairs, fed through to finish and then meat sales.

9 am Morning session – Codrington Hall, Hwy 30
1-4 pm Afternoon Handling - Homac Acres/Jeff McCann

Register: OMAFRA Brighton 613-475-1630

Cost \$40 for the day including lunch
Payable to Northumberland Cattlemen's Association

Harvestin' the County Supper

Harvestin' the County is about celebrating and supporting our local agricultural community. This summer we are proud to present the 3rd annual *Harvestin' the County* Supper.

This year's event will be held in Wellington, on Thursday, August 21st from 5pm – 8pm.
Rain or Shine!

Come and join local farmers and neighbours for a 100% locally grown meal including beef from the Prince Edward County Cattlemen's Association.

The *Harvestin' the County* Supper has been a sell out for the past 2 years, and this year's event promises to uphold that tradition.

Tickets are \$15 and children under 6 eat free!

Tickets will be available *soon* online and from the following locations: Campbell's Orchards, Hamlet Grocery, The Grange of Prince Edward Vineyards & Estate Winery, Wellington Convenience Store, Taste the County™, Hick's General Store, County Farm Centre, Picton Sobey's

**Prince Edward Cattlemen's Association
6th Annual Steer Show and Sale**

September 6, 2008

6:30pm

Picton Fair Grounds, Prince Edward County

Come and check the most exciting steer show and sale in the East. All steers are halter broke and lead around a ring, (this is where the excitement comes from, anything can happen). Live entertainment starts at 5:30 and new this year is a live auction of some great items. Tons of fun to be had by the whole family. If you have never been it is worth the drive, I promise! Call Melissa for more info or directions.

Contact: Melissa Baitley (613) 967-0075

**Peterborough County Cattlemen's Association
Annual Beef Barbecue**

August 3, 2008

Farm of Frank and Patsy Long
Ennismore, ON

Peterborough Cattlemen's Bus Trip

August 19-21

London Area

Contact: Sam Wood (705) 652-8913 or samwood@nexicom.net

Northumberland Cattlemen's Association Annual Beef Barbecue

July 17

4-7:30pm

At the farm of Tammy and Dan Ferguson
262 Ferguson Road, RR #1, Warkworth

Featuring a demonstration of Electronic ID Reading and Data Management
Cost: \$13 in advance, \$15 at the door. Children \$6.50-\$7.50, Under 12 free.

Contact: Sue Jouvstra (705) 355-5227

Peterborough Cattlemen's Association Annual Barbecue

August 3

Farm of Frank and Patsy Long,
Bruce Road, Ennismore.

Elgin Cattlemen's Association Annual Barbecue

The barbecue is on August 20th held at Pinafore park in St. Thomas between 5-7, it costs \$12.00 for adults and children 6-12 are \$2.00.

Peterborough Cattlemen's Association Bus Trip to London Area

August 19-21

Contact Sam Wood (705) 652-8913 F: (705) 652-6208 or samwood@nexicom.net

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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

A) OHIO firm expands recall of ground beef products due to possible E. Coli O157:H7 contamination

04.jul.08

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service

Amanda Eamich

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/R01_2008_Expanded/index.asp

The Kroger Co., a Cincinnati, Ohio, retailer is expanding its June 25 recall to include an undetermined amount of ground beef products that may be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service announced today. The recall is being expanded based on the ongoing epidemiological and traceback investigation of a foodborne illness outbreak.

The recall includes ground beef products packaged in Styrofoam trays and wrapped in clear cellophane, which were available at "in-store" service counters, with various sell-by dates between May 17 and July 5, at the following Kroger retail establishments:

Preparing Ground Beef For Safe Consumption

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 1-888-MPHOTLINE or visit www.fsis.usda.gov

Wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw meat and poultry. Wash cutting boards, dishes and utensils with hot, soapy water. Immediately clean spills.

Keep raw meat, fish and poultry away from other food that will not be cooked. Use separate cutting boards for raw meat, poultry and egg products and cooked foods.

Consumers should only eat ground beef or ground beef patties that have been cooked to a safe internal temperature of 160°F.

Color is NOT a reliable indicator that ground beef or ground beef patties have been cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful bacteria such as E. coli O157:H7.

The only way to be sure ground beef is cooked to a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria is to use a thermometer to measure the internal temperature.

Refrigerate raw meat and poultry within two hours after purchase or one hour if temperatures exceed 90°F. Refrigerate cooked meat and poultry within two hours after cooking.

FSIS advises all consumers to safely prepare their raw meat products, and only consume ground beef or ground beef patties that have been cooked temperature of 160° F. The only way to be sure ground beef is cooked to a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria is to use a thermometer to measure the internal temperature.

The June 25 recall was initiated after epidemiological investigations and a case control study conducted by the Michigan and Ohio Departments of Agriculture and Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined that there is an association between the ground beef products and foodborne illnesses. Currently, there are 41 illnesses reported in Michigan (21) and Ohio (20). The illnesses were linked through the epidemiological investigation by their pulsed field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) pattern, or DNA fingerprint, found in PulseNet, a database maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Anyone with signs or symptoms of foodborne illness should consult a medical professional.

E. coli O157:H7 is a potentially deadly bacterium that can cause bloody diarrhea, dehydration, and in the most severe cases, kidney failure. The very young, seniors and persons with weak immune systems are the most susceptible to foodborne illness.

Consumers with questions about the recall should contact the Kroger Consumer Hotline at (800) 632-6900. Media with questions about the recall should contact company Director of Corporate Affairs Meghan Glynn at (513) 762-1304.

Consumers with food safety questions can "Ask Karen," the FSIS virtual representative available 24 hours a day at AskKaren.gov. The toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) is available in English and Spanish and can be reached from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day.

B) GEORGIA: E. coli: Ground beef may be culprit

04.jul.08

Moultrie Observer

http://www.moultrieobserver.com/local/local_story_186231908.html?keyword=topstory

MOULTRIE -- Lab results received late Thursday by the disease team investigating a cluster of E. coli illnesses in Colquitt County indicate that ground beef may be involved, said Southwest Georgia Public Health District Deputy Health Director Brenda Greene on Friday.

"A specimen sample from one of the patients resulted in a match to the same strain of E. coli bacteria in disease outbreaks in Michigan and Ohio, and those illnesses are linked to ground beef," Greene said. "The National Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and state epidemiologists agree that ground beef may be a source of the infection in Colquitt County."

Ground beef is used in some of the dishes served in the Barbecue Pit, a Moultrie restaurant that has voluntarily closed as disease investigators attempt to find the source of Escherichia coli (E. coli) O157 contamination. A common thread among patients with confirmed cases of the disease is that they ate at the restaurant.

The tally of confirmed E. coli cases has now climbed to six, with three more cases still considered probable. The three "probable" E. coli patients have hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a severe illness that is often associated with the bacteria. The investigation team is awaiting lab results on 13 samples.

"We are seeing that fewer patients are seeking treatment at Colquitt Regional Medical Center for the symptoms associated with E. coli, and we are hopeful that the outbreak is tapering off," Greene said. Symptoms of E. coli include stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhea, which is often bloody. Greene pointed out that although eating at the Barbecue Pit proved to be a common link among patients with confirmed cases of E. coli, the vast majority of people who have eaten at the restaurant have remained well.

"If you have eaten there and are not feeling sick, you do not need to go to your healthcare provider or the health department for testing," Greene said. "We are continuing to recommend that if you are experiencing severe symptoms, especially bloody diarrhea, that is when you should seek treatment from your healthcare provider."

Since the newest clue to the source of the outbreak implicates ground beef, Greene reemphasized the importance of cooking meat thoroughly, of avoiding cross-contaminating food preparation surfaces and of washing hands.

"We cannot stress good food preparation and hand-washing practices enough," she said.

"At this time, we have no reason to believe that ground beef in grocery stores is unsafe," Greene added. "However, our investigation is continuing. Should new leads surface, we will of course pursue them vigorously."

The Barbecue Pit is working closely with disease investigators over the July Fourth holiday to gather samples and data, she said.

"State agencies and Colquitt Regional Medical Center are also integral parts of the investigation team. The Georgia State Patrol is partnering with us to help get samples to the testing facilities in Atlanta as quickly and efficiently as possible. While we do not know how soon the restaurant can reopen or how long the investigation will continue, we do know that all the parties involved are working very hard to find the answers."

People exposed to E. coli usually begin showing symptoms within three to four days, but the incubation period may be as short as one day or as long as 10 days, Greene said.

"Usually people infected with this disease get better without treatment within five to seven days. Some people have mild symptoms or no symptoms, while others may experience severe symptoms."

People infected with E. coli typically shed the bacteria for around a week.

C) PENNSYLVANIA: Raw milk defenders flock to county

05.jul.08

Intelligencer Journal

Brian Wallace

<http://articles.lancasteronline.com/local/4/224030>

Hundreds of people gathered under a yellow-and-white-striped tent on a windswept Christiana farm Friday afternoon to celebrate the right of all Americans to drink raw milk.

The crowd, some from as far away as California and New Mexico, also would have liked to celebrate America's independence from government regulation of the sale of unpasteurized milk. But about half of all states ban raw milk sales, citing safety concerns. Many others impose strict limits on producers.

Those restrictions spurred the creation last year of the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, which celebrated its first anniversary Friday with a picnic on the farm of Jake and Barbie Zook, who produce and sell raw milk.

In addition to defending farmers' rights to sell unprocessed foods directly to consumers unfettered by government regulation, the nonprofit group opposes government efforts to create a national database of farm animals.

The National Animal Identification System would force all farmers to embed microchips in their livestock so the federal Department of Agriculture can keep track of them.

Small farm owners object to the cost and government oversight of the program, and Amish farmers say participating would violate their religious beliefs.

But what united many at Friday's picnic was milk — the right to produce, sell and buy it in its natural state, straight from the cow.

The diverse crowd included Amish and "English" milk producers and other farmers, health-conscious consumers and civil libertarians.

Cyndi Green of Gaithersburg, Md., attended with her husband, John, and children, Sean and Elizabeth.

The Greens began drinking raw milk last July, Cyndi Green said, after she heard about its benefits at a support group for families with autistic children.

Sean, 13, who has the neurological disorder, had stopped drinking milk at 18 months of age because of gastrointestinal problems.

But since he started drinking raw milk, "his gut has completely healed" Cyndi Green said.

His cognitive and language skills also have improved greatly.

"His teachers at school say whatever you're doing at home, keep doing it, because his cognitive skills have improved," she said.

Proponents of raw milk claim pasteurization — the long-practiced process of heating milk to kill bacteria and pathogens such as E. coli and listeria — destroys good bacteria, enzymes and raw fats that boost the immune system, aid digestion and fight disease.

Pasteurization is an unnecessary throwback to the era before refrigeration, they say, and raw milk is completely safe when properly handled and stored.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration disagrees. It warns consumers not to drink unprocessed milk because it is a host to pathogens, including salmonella. Raw milk is especially risky for children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems, the FDA warns.

But more and more people — spurred by a desire to eat organic foods with limited processing and improve their health through holistic means — are drinking raw milk.

Because the Greens live in Maryland, where the sale of raw milk is banned, they must buy it in Pennsylvania.

The state permits direct sales to consumers on farms, but recently has cracked down on license requirements on all other sales.

Pete Kennedy, legislative director for the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, told the crowd the organization is fighting such restrictions in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Vermont, Missouri, New Jersey, Maryland and California.

The group also seeks to overturn a "ridiculous" federal ban on transportation of raw milk across state lines, he said.

To help consumers get around state laws, the Legal Defense Fund helps them establish cow shares, in which they purchase a share of a farmer's herd and receive raw milk as part-owners. Heather Dodge of Baltimore gets her milk through a similar cooperative arrangement with a farmer. Her family began drinking raw milk in November for health reasons.

"We try to eat all of our food in a more natural state," she said. "I figured if I was getting it from a farm and (the cows) were grass fed, then it's going to be healthier for me."

Her husband's seasonal allergies "have totally cleared up" since the family switched to raw milk, she said.

Dodge said she supports the Legal Defense Fund's efforts to make raw milk sales legal.

"I don't see why I shouldn't have a right to get my food directly from the farmer, and a small farmer at that," she said.

"Of all the things I have a right to do, that seems a pretty basic thing."

D) Before you barbecue: Beef recall hits 20 states

04.jul.08

Associated Press

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-07-03-beef-recall_N.htm

CINCINNATI — First it was the tomatoes. Now it's the beef.

Fourth of July picnic tables are getting a careful look as familiar hamburgers are feared to be among the tainted ingredients in separate food safety scares.

On Wednesday, The Kroger Co. expanded its voluntary recall of some ground beef products to its stores in more than 20 states, saying the meat may be contaminated with E. coli.

The nation's biggest traditional grocer also urged customers to check the ground beef in their refrigerators and freezers to determine whether it is covered by the recall.

The warning comes as federal investigators try to pinpoint the source of a separate salmonella outbreak linked to tomatoes that has sickened nearly 900 people, raising more questions about the nation's food safety system.

While insisting that tomatoes remain the leading suspect, investigators are looking at other produce but remain mum on exactly what vegetables are getting tracked.

Kroger's recall stems from meat obtained from one of Kroger's suppliers, Nebraska Beef Ltd., that has been linked to illnesses reported in Michigan and Ohio between May 31 and June 8 caused by E. coli bacteria.

Nebraska Beef has recalled from wholesalers and other processing companies nearly 532,000 pounds of ground beef produced on five dates between May 16 and June 24.

Kroger said Wednesday that as a precaution it removed from stores all ground beef supplied by Nebraska Beef marked with sell by dates of May 21 or later.

"Ground beef in stores today comes from other suppliers not involved in the recall," Kroger spokeswoman Meghan Glynn said Wednesday.

The Cincinnati-based company initiated a recall June 25 for Kroger stores in Michigan and in central and northern Ohio. The expanded recall includes ground beef sold at Fred Meyer, QFC, Ralphs, Smith's, Baker's, King Soopers, City Markets, Hilander, Owen's, Pay Less and Scott's with overlapping sell-by dates from mid-May through mid-July.

In some stores, the recall includes products in Styrofoam tray packages wrapped in clear cellophane or purchased from an in-store service counter. It does not include ground beef sold in 1-, 3-, or 5-pound sealed tubes or frozen ground beef patties sold in the frozen food section of its stores.

Kroger is notifying customers about the expanded recall by placing signs in stores in meat departments. It also is using its register receipt notification system.

Kroger can track purchases by customers who use the company's loyalty card, which entitles customers to certain discounts. Sometimes those customers receive information about products the next time the card is used and a receipt is issued, Glynn said.

In other cases, Kroger is able to call customers who used the loyalty card to purchase a tainted product, and it is doing that with the ground beef recall, Glynn said.

Symptoms of E. coli infection can include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea, vomiting and fever. It can potentially be deadly, but most people recover within five to seven days.

Health officials urge people to thoroughly cook hamburger and, if possible, use a digital thermometer to make sure meat has been heated to at least 160 degrees.

They also recommend that people wash their hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.

E) Task force targets 'fiestas' selling illegal raw dairy, other illicit goods

06.jul.08

Press-Enterprise

Laurie Lucas

http://www.pe.com/localnews/inland/stories/PE_News_Local_S_raids06.456948c.html

For sellers, these open-air markets are a quick way to rake in \$1,500 to \$2,000, tax-free.

For buyers, these gatherings satisfy cravings for cultural traditions -- cheap, homemade cheese and an alcoholic beverage made with fresh raw milk.

But for health and law enforcement officials, these so-called Sunday "fiestas" are illegal public nuisances that can make people sick from consuming unpasteurized dairy products produced under unsanitary conditions.

In poorer areas of cities and in rural, unincorporated parts of San Bernardino and Riverside counties, a team of authorities confiscates queso fresco, fresh cheese made in bathtubs, baskets, wooden molds, pipe sections, even coffins, said Kenneth P. Chandler, with Riverside County's Department of Environmental Health, where he created and heads the Illegal Food Program. Recently, 155 pounds of homemade cheese tested positive for the bacteria staphylococcus, he said. The contaminated queso fresco was sold from the trunk of a car and seized in a June 22 raid in Eastvale and in the Home Gardens area southwest of Riverside.

The Inland Valley Task Force, which conducted the raid, also snapped up and discarded potent but perilous parajetes. It's concocted with warm, raw milk squirted directly from a cow's or goat's teat, coffee, cocoa, cinnamon, chocolate or sugar and 100 pure cane alcohol that's bottled in Tijuana but illegal in the U.S.

"There's not a proliferation of these cases," said Stephanie Weissman, an assistant district attorney in Riverside County, who is part of the team. "We're just catching them"

Task Force's Success

Chandler said the task force's aggressive approach is paying off. At most sites, fiesta attendance has plummeted from 300 to 30, evidence that the word is getting out.

The 30-member team, composed of investigators from dozens of agencies, also pounces on illegal drugs; weapons; counterfeit, pirated and bootlegged materials; animal slaughter; undocumented cattle; and rooster fights that often accompany these events.

In connection with the June 22 raid, authorities submitted three felony cases to the district attorney for unpasteurized dairy sales and production and alcohol sales; seized 13 head of undocumented cattle; made one arrest for methamphetamine possession; and confiscated 300 pounds of cheese and parajetes.

"Parajetes is very close to wood alcohol," Chandler said, citing its high alcohol content. "I've seen people drinking it destroyed by 8 o'clock in the morning."

The team mobilizes at least once a month to check out complaints from neighbors about traffic problems, weekend crowds and excessive noise at these backyard open-air markets. A loose affiliation launched six years ago, the task force gained clout -- as well as more state, federal, county, local and private partners, and official status in 2006.

Catching Offenders

Scarlett Treviso is a state investigator with the Department of Food and Agriculture, whose turf covers all of Southern California. She identified prime Inland trouble spots as Chino, Chino Hills, Eastvale, Glen Avon, the Home Gardens area, Jurupa Valley, Pedley, Mira Loma, Lake Elsinore, Perris and Nuevo.

Some of those peddling illegal dairy products are repeat offenders, while others are rookies, unaware of the health risks and regulations, Treviso said.

"They're all trying to make a living," she said. "But it's a misdemeanor to sell milk and a felony to manufacture it."

Sellers usually charge \$4 to \$6 for a cup of parajetes and \$5 to \$8 for a pound of homemade cheese.

The task force's work is important, she said, "to protect the citizens of the Inland Empire and educate them to purchase factory-sealed and regulated dairy products."

Offenders may spend anywhere from days to months in jail, and almost every case is settled out of court. No-shows are served with bench warrants.

Treviso said they don't bother the shoppers, who quickly scatter once the team shows up. But at every raid, the team distributes brochures in English and Spanish about the risks of illegal food sellers.

"If we can cut off their customers, we can put the sellers and manufacturers out of business," Chandler said.

Agents from the Board of Equalization have joined the sweeps to nab illegal sellers for violations of taxation and revenue, which carry a mandatory minimum fine of \$1,000. The fiestas are unfair to legitimate business owners who use licensed facilities and pay and charge taxes, Weissman said.

Breeding Ground for Disease

The main concern is health and safety. Raw milk and raw dairy products may contain disease-causing pathogens such as campylobacter, E. coli, listeria, salmonella and yersinia.

Over the past five years there have been 18 outbreaks of bacterial illness involving raw milk or raw milk cheeses in 15 states, according to an FDA report.

Given the unsanitary conditions -- the flies and cockroaches, plus the lack of hand washing, sterilization equipment, refrigeration or pasteurization -- Chandler said the fiesta sites are breeding grounds for disease. But he said that most/ food poisonings are underreported, misdiagnosed or reported after the person recovers when it's too late to identify the cause.

He doesn't know how many Inland residents have been sickened, because food-borne illness often manifests itself with flu-like symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or fever.

"They may not realize that they might have gotten sick drinking raw milk taken from an infected goat's teat," Chandler said.

F) ALBERTA: Food safety helps drive consumer confidence, says branded beef producers group

07.jul.08

Verified Beef Production

Terry Grajczyk

Calgary, Alta -- Canada's internationally recognized safety standards for food safety can help drive consumer confidence and influence buying decisions at the meat counter, says a group of Western Canadian beef producers who market their own branded product.

Prairie Heritage Beef Producers, which markets its product as "natural" beef produced without antibiotics, growth hormones, or animal by-products, has made registration in the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program a requirement for all of the 18 producers in its value chain. VBP is Canada's verified on-farm food safety program for beef and is based on internationally recognized food safety standards.

"At the end of the day, VBP is a tool that helps us prove to consumers that we're doing what we say we're doing," says Jason Hagel of Hagel Feeders in Linden, Alberta, a Prairie Heritage producer.

"The cattle that go into the Prairie Heritage system really do not get sick. The procedures of the VBP program have played a big role in helping us keep the animals healthy without the use of antibiotics."

VBP standards have also helped Prairie Heritage build a retail base, says Hagel. "Some of the retail stores are wary of bringing in new product because they do not always know what they're getting. In that regard, VBP is a good tool. We can direct retailers to the Web site and they can see that our production practices are based on internationally accepted standards. The bottom line is that it's not just a good tool for niche marketers, but for the profile of the whole beef industry."

VBP is based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. For Canada's beef industry, these principles have been adapted into Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which cover animal health management, cattle shipping, medicated feed, pesticide control and training/communications.

A key component of the VBP program is strong record keeping practices. Although Hagel, who also produces commodity beef, already had an extensive record keeping program in place, the practice took on a new perspective in the context of running a combination natural/commodity beef feedlot.

"First, we make sure that the commodity animals which receive antibiotic treatments are tagged, marked, and segregated into a separate pen with records kept on all of that activity," says Hagel.

"From there, we keep really good records of what's being fed and to which animals. Any time we receive supplement, we document it and store it in a separate and clearly labelled storage area."

Flushing feed mixing equipment is a crucial step in making sure residues from treatments do not end up where they do not belong. "In order to avoid consumption by unintended cattle, we flush any containers that contain medicated feed. The flushed feed is then used or disposed of so it does not present a contamination risk to other feed."

An example of a practice that was driven by Hagel Feeders' registration in VBP is checking the cattle for unknown broken needles before shipping them for processing. In line with Prairie Heritage Beef Producers' commitment to humane animal handling, this step also gives Hagel the opportunity to inspect the truck for anything that may cause the animals discomfort in the shipping process. "Stress on animals is 85 percent of the reason cattle get sick," he says. More information is featured in a new article, "Verified Beef Production backs beef value chain success," available on the VBP Web site at www.verifiedbeef.org. The VBP Web site also features information on program fundamentals and the latest news and developments, including contact information to find out about VBP workshops across the country.

G) S. KOREAN president replaces 3 ministers in fallout over U.S. beef

07.jul.08

Associated Press

USA Today

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-07-07-skorea-ministers_N.htm

SEOUL -- South Korea's president replaced three ministers Monday amid the fallout from a much-criticized U.S. beef import deal, but left his Cabinet largely intact despite their offer to resign to stem weeks of anti-government protests.

Lee Myung-bak has been under intense fire over an April agreement to resume imports of U.S. beef. The deal has led to near-daily street rallies over perceptions the country could be exposed to mad cow disease, and the demonstrations have grown to include opponents of the conservative Lee's pro-business policies.

The shakeup was aimed at "making a new start" while giving other Cabinet members another chance, presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said.

Lee chose new agriculture and welfare ministers Monday because of the mishandling of the beef deal, while the education minister was replaced over alleged financial wrongdoing.

The protests forced Seoul to negotiate an amendment to the import deal last month to limit shipments to beef from cattle younger than 30 months, believed less susceptible to mad cow disease. But critics have called for a total renegotiation of the import agreement, saying more safeguards are needed.

Lee has publicly apologized over the beef issue and replaced top advisers.

But it is still unclear whether his latest response will help quell lingering public concerns over the safety of U.S. beef and satisfy the protesters.

The main opposition Democratic Party, which has been supportive of the protests that have been spearheaded by left-wing grass roots groups, said the Cabinet reshuffle falls short of what the people want.

"It is like pouring cold water on the public expectations," spokeswoman Cha Young said.

The new Cabinet nominees must go through parliamentary confirmation hearings, but it remains unclear when the hearings will occur because the Democratic Party is boycotting the National Assembly over the beef deal. However, the legislature does not have the power to block the president's appointments.

South Korea was the third-largest overseas market for U.S. beef until it banned imports after a case of mad cow disease was detected in 2003, the first of three confirmed cases in the United States.

H) US: Company expands beef recall, counters USDA criticism

08.jul.08

CIDRAP News

Lisa Schnirring

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/fs/food-disease/news/jul0808beef.html>

Nebraska Beef, Ltd., recently expanded a recall of its beef amid reports that its production practices might have been inadequate for controlling *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, as the number of patients sickened in a two-state outbreak rose to 41.

On Jul 3 the Omaha company expanded its Jun 30 recall to include 5.3 million pounds of its beef, including all trim and other products intended for use in ground beef, produced between May 16

and Jun 26, according to a press release from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The company's previous recall applied only to 531,707 pounds of trim, chuck, and other components. According to trace-back investigation findings, Nebraska Beef supplied beef to certain Kroger grocery stores in Michigan and Ohio. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) said ongoing epidemiologic and trace-back investigation findings prompted the expanded recall. According to a previous FSIS statement, ground beef samples from two federally inspected establishments supplied by Nebraska Beef and multiple samples of Kroger ground beef from patients' homes were contaminated with E coli matching the outbreak strain. The expanded recall by Nebraska beef prompted the Kroger Co. to expand its own ground beef recall on Jul 3. Previously Kroger had recalled ground beef from stores in Michigan and parts of Ohio with sell-by dates between May 21 and Jun 8. The company didn't specify how much ground beef was subject to either recall.

USDA faults safety practices, response time

The FSIS said it found that Nebraska Beef's production practices didn't adequately control E coli O157:H7. "The products subject to the recall may have been produced under unsanitary conditions," the USDA statement said.

Yesterday, Amanda Eamich, a USDA spokeswoman, said Nebraska Beef was initially alerted in the first half of June that two of its trim samples had tested positive for E coli O157:H7, but the company was slow to respond, the Associated Press (AP) reported.

However, Bill Lamson, a Nebraska Beef spokesman, said the company added another lactic acid bath to kill the pathogen at its Omaha processing plant and hired an independent laboratory to test its products, the AP reported.

He said Nebraska beef didn't believe the initial findings warranted a recall. "We're following their normal procedure," he told the AP.

Lamson told Meatingplace.com, a meat industry news Web site, that the company received notices from the FSIS on Jun 9 and Jun 17 and that the company reviewed its records and adjusted its processes, steps that he said addressed the problem.

He said the FSIS notices also suggested that other companies supplied meat used in ground beef that was the subject of Kroger's initial recall on Jun 25.

The company didn't learn that there was potential for a recall until Jun 28 when the USDA told the company that its investigation had linked Nebraska Beef to illnesses in Michigan and Ohio, Lamson told Meatingplace.com. "There is circumstantial evidence, but no tests have established a direct link," he said.

Eamich said Nebraska Beef has now made changes in its food safety plan to pass federal inspection and that the USDA will work with the company in the weeks ahead to bolster its safety plan, according to the AP report.

In October 2007, in the wake of a string of recalls that had nearly doubled from the previous year, the FSIS launched a plan to reduce E coli O157:H7 in ground beef. Measures ranged from speeding up planned safety enhancements, such as follow-up testing on high-risk processors, to new initiatives to control the pathogen during slaughter and processing. The safety plan also included a new safety inspection checklist.

Cases climb slowly

According to the most recent update on the outbreak from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of Jul 2, 41 cases had been linked to the outbreak, including 21 in Michigan and 20 in Ohio.

The latest illness onset date was Jun 20, which is 6 days later than listed in the CDC's last update. Twenty-two patients have been hospitalized, and one developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a potentially fatal kidney condition. No deaths have been reported.

I) USDA says Nebraska beef slow to respond to E. coli

08.jul.08

Business Week

Josh Funk

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D91PAEOO0.htm>

Federal officials said Monday that Nebraska Beef Ltd. responded slowly to indications that its products might be tainted with E. coli, though it has now voluntarily recalled more than 5 million pounds of meat.

Nebraska Beef was notified in the first half of June that two samples of its trim to be used in ground beef had tested positive for E. coli, USDA spokeswoman Amanda Eamich said.

The company's products were later linked to an outbreak of E. coli infections affecting 41 people in Michigan and Ohio. The recall announced last week was expanded from 531,707 to 5.3 million pounds on Thursday.

"The establishment didn't take appropriate actions when positives were found," Eamich said. "It's all about their ability to control E. coli 0157:H7."

Nebraska Beef spokesman Bill Lamson disagreed that the company was slow to respond.

He said it added another lactic acid bath, which helps kill bacteria, to its plant, which is in Omaha, and has hired an outside lab to test its products.

The recalled beef was sold to wholesalers and distributors for further processing. So consumer labels likely will not include the "EST 19336" code that identifies Nebraska Beef.

Nebraska Beef initially recalled trim produced on five dates between May 16 and June 24 and expanded the recall to include all trimmings and other products for use in ground beef that it produced between May 16 and June 26.

Twenty-two people have been hospitalized since the first case of E. coli linked to the beef was identified May 30, according to the CDC. One person has developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic-uremic syndrome.

Lamson said notices the company received indicate at least two other companies supplied meat for the ground beef involved.

He said Nebraska Beef has cooperated with federal investigators, and it didn't believe a recall would be needed when it received the first test results.

"We're following their normal procedure," he said.

Eamich said Nebraska Beef has now made enough changes to its food-safety plan to satisfy federal inspectors that its products are safe. But the U.S. Department of Agriculture will work with Nebraska Beef in coming weeks to enhance its safety plan.

Typically, the department only shuts down a meat-processing plant when there is an immediate public health threat, Eamich said.

Lamson said privately held Nebraska Beef slaughters about 2,000 head of cattle a day and employs about 800 people. He said it is too soon to know how much the recall will cost.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that E. coli sickens about 73,000 people and kills 61 each year in the United States. Most of those who die have weak immune systems, such as the elderly or very young.

Cooking ground beef to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees should kill E. coli bacteria, if they are present. The USDA recommends that consumers use a meat thermometer while cooking to verify they have cooked meat thoroughly.

The E. coli 0157:H7 variant can cause severe illness and even death in humans. Symptoms of E. coli infection include stomach cramps and diarrhea that may turn bloody within one to three days.

J) NEBRASKA: Omaha beef recall

07.jul.08

Healthinspections.com

<http://healthinspections.com/articles.cfm?YXJ0aWNsZUIEPTEyOA==>

A half-million pounds of hamburger has now been recalled by Nebraska Beef of Omaha.

Federal investigators say that 40 people have gotten sick in Michigan and Ohio from the company's meat, and the government took a verbal shot at Nebraska Beef saying that the company's production practices are "insufficient to control E.coli."

There is no love lost between the government and Omaha Beef. The company has twice sued the Department of Agriculture. The most recent suit complained that government inspectors were out to get the company. The suit was dismissed.

Kroger is the supermarket chain taking the biggest hit from the recall, forced to pull ground beef from its shelves that was purchased from Omaha Beef.

The E.Coli was traced back to Omaha beef using sophisticated DNA testing.

FIGHTING A CHURCH

Omaha Beef is also involved in a legal battle with a church over E.Coli.

A fundraising supper at a Minnesota church turned deadly in 2006 when several women got sick -- and one woman died -- from E.Coli that was traced to ground beef used in meatballs.

Omaha Beef was identified as the source of the E.Coli by local health investigators. But, in an unusual move, the company sued the church claiming that the bacteria could be the result of poor handling by the ladies of the church.

K) An E. coli burger topped with Salmonella tomatoes: A food safety guide for the presidential candidates

07.jul.08

Seattle PI

Andrew Schneider

<http://blog.seattlepi.nwsourc.com/secretingredients/archives/142800.asp>

In writing about almost anything except a criminal trial, I do my best to avoid quoting lawyers. This, mainly because regardless of the topic, my mailbox is immediately flooded with warm messages accusing me of selling out, of being toady to one side or the other.

Nevertheless, today, I deviate from this rule, and I'm sure I will hear about it because I'm sharing some opinions of well-publicized Seattle food safety lawyer William Marler.

Marler is the treasured source of reporters around the globe -- in part because he has mastered the internet. His vast network of Web sites pops up any time someone searches for E. coli, salmonella or any of the other foodborne illnesses. What is far less publicized, but far more significant, is his quiet relationship with some of the top government food safety officials around the globe.

I offer this background only so you might better understand why it is that I am writing about the lawyer and his views.

He tells us that tomatoes have been recalled nearly every year for the last 10 and since the spring of 2007, more than 30 million pounds of chopped beef has been recalled after being linked to ill children in nearly every state.

Having watched holiday shoppers trying to sort through the E. coli warnings posted in the meat departments of Fred Myer and QFC, I agree with Marler's view that consumers have lost confidence in the businesses that feed them and a government that is supposed to protect them. And he's not shy in pointing his finger at the causes of increasing outbreaks of foodborne contaminates. Marler's list includes "businesses more focused on sales than safety, fragmented government agencies, inadequate inspection of foods, poorly educated food handlers and lack of consumer awareness."

Here is some of Marler's list of what the next president -- be it McCain or Obama -- could do to combat this recurring epidemic:

Improve surveillance of bacterial and viral diseases. The entire medical community needs to be encouraged to test for pathogens and report findings directly to local and state health departments, and the CDC promptly.

These same agencies need to learn to "play well together." Turf battles need to take a back seat to stopping an outbreak and tracking it to its source.

Require real training and certification of food handlers at restaurants and grocery stores. There also should be incentives for ill employees to say home from work.

Stiffen license requirements for large farm, retail and wholesale food outlets, so that nobody gets a license until they and their employees have shown they understand the hazards and how to avoid them.

Increase food inspections, especially with imported food. More inspectors are needed both domestically and offshore.

Food safety statutes -- at all levels -- must be modernized by replacing the existing collection of often conflicting laws and regulation with one uniform food safety law of the highest standard.

New technology must be used to make food more traceable so that when an outbreak occurs, authorities can quickly identify its source to limit spread of the contamination and stop disruption to the economy.

Improve consumer understanding of the risks of food-borne illness.

In America, according to the CDC, every year nearly a quarter of our population is sickened, 350,000 hospitalized and 5,000 die, because they ate tainted food, the trial lawyer said.

These numbers set the scene for Marler's final suggestion for the next occupant of the Oval Office. He believes that there are too few legal consequences for sickening or killing customers by selling contaminated food in the U.S.

"We don't need to impose the death penalty, as China did recently," Marler said. "But we should impose stiff fines -- and even prison sentences -- for violators, and even stiffer penalties for repeat violators."

I called the public relations people for a couple of the largest grocery chains and two federal agencies responsible for food safety and invited all to comment on the lawyer's suggestion. Watch this space for the other side of this story. That is, if they call back.

L) U.S. agriculture secretary confident meat is safe

09.jul.08

USA Today

The Associated Press

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-07-09-beef-tour_N.htm?csp=34

SCHUYLER, Neb. (AP) -- The U.S. agriculture secretary expressed confidence in the nation's food safety system, but said the meat processing industry will always face challenges because the bacteria that animals carry evolves.

"I don't think we'll ever see a totally bacteria-free environment in the United States," Ed Schafer said Tuesday during a visit of several Nebraska meat processing plants.

His tour did not include the Nebraska Beef Ltd. plant in Omaha, which recalled 5.3 million pounds of meat last week that has been linked to 41 E. coli infections in Michigan and Ohio.

Schafer said he believes the company and not the USDA inspectors at the plant should be held responsible for the tainted meat. He said the inspectors are there only to make sure the plant follows USDA rules.

The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service concluded last week that Nebraska Beef's production practices were insufficient to effectively control E. coli bacteria.

Now the focus is on determining exactly how the meat was contaminated at Nebraska Beef, he said, and making sure steps are taken to prevent future problems.

Schafer's tour was designed to showcase innovative ways companies are working to keep meat safe. He visited a Cargill Meat Solutions beef plant in Schuyler, an Omaha Steaks processing plant in Omaha and the Hormel pork plant in Fremont, that produces the processed, canned meat known as Spam. Schafer said he's amazed at the relatively small number of people who get sick from eating meat each year when the number is compared to the millions of pounds of meat produced. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that E. coli sickens about 73,000 people and kills 61 each year in the United States. Most of those who die have weak immune systems, such as the elderly or very young.

E. coli bacteria was discovered in the late 1970s and is present in the intestines of most cattle. It also can be found in deer, goats and sheep. It doesn't cause problems for the livestock, but the E. coli O157:H7 variant can cause severe illness in humans.

Industry critics say staff shortages are compounded by a change in USDA regulations in the late 1990s that gave slaughterhouses more responsibility for devising their own safety checklists. That policy, critics say, places slaughterhouses on an honor system that can lead to abuse.

But meat companies say they are developing new strategies to control bacteria.

At the Cargill plant, cattle carcasses are washed down with chemical solutions before and after the hides are removed to help reduce E. coli.

Later in the process, sides of beef are examined under ultraviolet light that reveals any hint of chlorophyll. The presence of that plant chemical on the beef suggests contact with feces and possible E. coli contamination. The beef is pulled aside so any contaminated areas can be removed.

The hide-washing system and UV scanners Cargill uses are examples of the kind of measures the meat industry has developed to control E. coli since a 1993 outbreak in which four children died and

hundreds of people became ill after eating undercooked hamburgers from Jack in the Box restaurants.

"Most of this equipment you had to invent, and test and test," said Vaughn Blum, general manager of the Cargill plant.

At Omaha Steaks, all of the ground beef is irradiated after it has been packaged to kill any bacteria that is present.

Hormel uses a high-pressure pasteurization process to ensure that its pork is safe. That step also takes place after packaging.

But Schafer does not believe innovative food safety measures like the ones he saw in Nebraska should necessarily be required for all plants because each company chooses what works for them. Schafer said the plants he visited all appeared well run and safety was a priority.

"I wish everybody would have a chance to see the process," Schafer said. Then they could see the cleanliness of the plant, and all the effort that goes into producing a safe product, he said.

M) SOUTH KOREAN doctors hold US beef-eating event to dispel mad cow disease fears

09.jul.08

International Herald Tribune

The Associated Press

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/07/09/asia/AS-SKorea-US-Beef.php>

SEOUL, South Korea -- Sitting at tables with built-in grills, leading South Korean doctors and business executives ate U.S. beef on Wednesday in a bid to dispel public health fears.

The 19 physicians and executives ate American sirloin, with one top doctor saying it "tastes good and tender" and telling fellow South Koreans not to worry about getting mad cow disease from eating U.S. beef.

"There is no food whatsoever that we can say is 100 percent safe," said Choo Soo-ho, head of the Korean Medical Association, South Korea's largest doctors' organization. "But I can say the chance of catching mad cow disease (from eating U.S. beef) is nearly zero percent."

The Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a major business lobby, co-organized the event without government help in an effort to end the "useless argument" over U.S. beef so that the nation can concentrate on overcoming economic difficulties, said spokesman Park Jong-kab.

South Korea's agreement in April to resume imports of U.S. beef sparked near-daily street protests over mad cow disease concerns because the deal called for scrapping most restrictions the country had previously maintained over fears of the illness.

Despite repeated government assurances of the safety of U.S. meat, fears have been fanned due to false and sensational media reports along with unsubstantiated rumors posted on the Internet, suggesting the disease can spread through the air.

Fears became so intense that American beef is considered by some Koreans as akin to poison.

Local media reported high-school girls crying over mad cow fears.

Unrelenting protests forced South Korea's government to negotiate an amendment to the April deal last month to import only beef from younger cattle considered less at risk of the disease. Still, smaller protests have continued.

U.S. beef went on sale early this month, but is still not widely available because large supermarket chains and restaurants are reluctant to sell or serve it for fear of a public backlash.

Choo said he organized the event with other doctors' and business associations to help people overcome fears of mad cow disease that he said were "not verified and sometimes exaggerated" and are now threatening to hurt the nation's economy.

"I love meat. This tastes good and tender," Choo said, dipping a piece of beef in a small salt dish.

"Eat it without any uneasiness. I can guarantee (the safety) by staking the honor of the Korean Medical Association," Moon Tai-joon, honorary chairman of the doctors' association, told reporters amid a barrage of camera flashes and smokes from the grill at his table.

The event, at a 30-table beef restaurant in western Seoul which began serving U.S. beef Saturday, drew wide media attention. Choo and Sohn Kyung-sik, head of the business lobby, had to stop eating several times to pose for cameras.

Owner Kim Chang-jo, 58, said consumer reaction had been positive.

"We've had about 30 calls a day inquiring about the location of our restaurant," Kim said. "There are many people who say they would buy and eat U.S. beef because it's cheaper and tastes good." Kim's restaurant, called "Orae Drim" in Korean, serves U.S. beef for about a third of the price of domestic beef. Seasoned rib meat is sold for 8,500 won (US\$8.50) while the same cut meat from domestic cattle usually sells for 25,000-30,000 won (US\$25-US\$30).

"Our customers say they have the right to choose, and whether we should eat U.S. beef or not should be left up to people's own discretion," Kim said.

N) UK: Bovine tuberculosis wasting £70m of milk

04.jul.08

Famer's Weekly Interactive

Jonathan Riley

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2008/07/04/111081/bovine-tuberculosis-wasting-70m-of-milk.html>

Bovine tuberculosis is costing the UK economy more than £70m in wasted milk production capacity. NFU vice president Meurig Raymond said that by the year end 40,000 cattle will be culled. That represented a staggering waste of 280m litres worth of milk production each year.

"At present prices that is £72m," Mr Raymond said.

"The government says it is worried about food price inflation so how come it stands back and watches hundreds of millions of litres of milk going down the drain.

"Hilary Benn has ignored the fact that badgers are spreading the disease.

"He has side-stepped science which showed a cull could work.

"He has overlooked the fact that farming can meet the requirements of the badger culling trial.

"And he has absolved his responsibility to the livestock industry and to the public," Mr Raymond added.

Key facts- milk loss to the industry:

* 40,000 cattle

* 280m litres

* £72.5m

* 2% of UK quota

O) New mass S KOREA beef protest demanded President's resignation

05.jul.08

All Headline News

Mayur Pahilajani

<http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7011512716>

Seoul, South Korea -- Tens of thousands of South Koreans protested against the government's plan to resume U.S. beef imports under a new agreement between the two sides.

Police estimate 50,000 people turned out in Seoul on Saturday in the renewed demonstrations demanding he resignation of President Lee Myung-Bak and stopping the beef import plan.

In the latest mass protest, the crowd gathered in front of City Hall in the capital city of Seoul, waving banners, flags and candles.

Last month, the United States had struck a deal on beef exports with South Korea to ease the concerns related to meat safety.

South Korean President's administration announced that it had reached a deal with the U.S. to ensure the safety of beef imports in the country.

The U.S. has agreed not to export beef to South Korea from cattle older than 30 months, which is believed to carry a higher risk of mad cow disease or BSE, to quell public concern that sparked a political crisis.

The new mass protest is in the series of weeks long demonstrations sparked by the initial decision by the authorities to ease the quarantine regulations on U.S. beef based on the April 18 agreement with Washington.

Protesters have previously clashed with police, forcing riot troops to fire water cannon and arrest 228 people. Around 100 protesters and 40 security officers were wounded in the clashes, with a male citizen reportedly suffering a cerebral hemorrhage.

The U.S. beef imports were suspended for more than four years following the first U.S. case of mad cow disease in a Canadian-born cow in 2003 in Washington State.

It was planned that the markets will be reopened mainly for the U.S. to send in all cuts of beef from cattle of all ages but the countries like Japan will not be allowed as the locals still fear of mad cow disease.

However, after the latest agreement between the two countries, they will now introduce an age verification system.

Meanwhile, President Lee Myung-bak, who took office in February, has seen his popularity decrease among the masses, especially after the widespread protests started.

P) SOUTH KOREA: Hyundai Motor workers to stage 2nd strike against U.S. beef import

07.jul.08

Yonhap News Agency

<http://www.tradingmarkets.com/.site/news/Stock%20News/1737724/>

SEOUL -- The labor union of South Korea's largest automaker, Hyundai Motor Co. (KSE:005380), said today it plans to stage a second partial strike this month to protest the resumption of beef imports from the United States and other pro-business government policies.

About 44,000 unionized workers at Hyundai's three South Korean plants plan to walk off their jobs for four hours on Thursday during both day and night shifts, a union official said.

The planned work stoppage is to be the second of what the government has called "political" strikes coordinated by an umbrella union of auto industry workers.

Hyundai's labor union will join a wider industrial action by the Korea Metal Workers Union, the umbrella labor group that includes South Korean automakers' unions.

The umbrella group said it would coordinate nationwide one-day protests this week, demanding the government renegotiate quarantine terms for U.S. beef imports to quell concerns over mad cow disease.

Last Wednesday, Hyundai workers staged a two-hour partial strike, causing 300 billion won (US\$286 million) in lost production.

The government has pledged tougher action against such strikes, which it deems illegal because demands are not directly related to pay or working conditions.

Police are hunting down leaders of Hyundai's union for staging the strike.

The Hyundai union refuted the government's assertion last week, saying the move was legitimate because it was approved by a majority of union members.

"We increased our efforts to fight (these policies) as the labor ministry and prosecution called our industrial action illegal," said Chang Kyu-ho, a spokesman at Hyundai's union.

American beef began to hit store shelves in South Korea last week and consumer reactions were reportedly positive. The imported meat costs about one-quarter the price of beef from South Korean cattle.

South Korea was once the world's third-largest buyer of U.S. beef, importing an average of US\$850 million worth a year. Imports of the product were banned in 2003 after the discovery of the first U.S. case of mad cow disease.

Q) S. KOREAN president replaces 3 ministers in fallout over U.S. beef

07.jul.08

Associated Press

USA Today

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-07-07-skorea-ministers_N.htm

SEOUL -- South Korea's president replaced three ministers Monday amid the fallout from a much-criticized U.S. beef import deal, but left his Cabinet largely intact despite their offer to resign to stem weeks of anti-government protests.

Lee Myung-bak has been under intense fire over an April agreement to resume imports of U.S. beef. The deal has led to near-daily street rallies over perceptions the country could be exposed to mad cow disease, and the demonstrations have grown to include opponents of the conservative Lee's pro-business policies.

The shakeup was aimed at "making a new start" while giving other Cabinet members another chance, presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said.

Lee chose new agriculture and welfare ministers Monday because of the mishandling of the beef deal, while the education minister was replaced over alleged financial wrongdoing.

The protests forced Seoul to negotiate an amendment to the import deal last month to limit shipments to beef from cattle younger than 30 months, believed less susceptible to mad cow disease. But critics have called for a total renegotiation of the import agreement, saying more safeguards are needed.

Lee has publicly apologized over the beef issue and replaced top advisers.

But it is still unclear whether his latest response will help quell lingering public concerns over the safety of U.S. beef and satisfy the protesters.

The main opposition Democratic Party, which has been supportive of the protests that have been spearheaded by left-wing grass roots groups, said the Cabinet reshuffle falls short of what the people want.

"It is like pouring cold water on the public expectations," spokeswoman Cha Young said.

The new Cabinet nominees must go through parliamentary confirmation hearings, but it remains unclear when the hearings will occur because the Democratic Party is boycotting the National Assembly over the beef deal. However, the legislature does not have the power to block the president's appointments.

South Korea was the third-largest overseas market for U.S. beef until it banned imports after a case of mad cow disease was detected in 2003, the first of three confirmed cases in the United States.

R) Gyeonggi to end consumption of downer cows

08.jul.08

Chosunilbo

<http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200807/200807080017.html>

About 600 so-called downer cattle have been slaughtered and sold for consumption in Gyeonggi Province every year. The affliction, which causes animals to stagger, has nothing to do with mad cow disease, but the Gyeonggi provincial government decided no longer to slaughter such cattle in the future but buy all of them to dispose of for purposes other than eating.

The provincial government on Monday said about 600 of the 130,000 cattle slaughtered there every year cannot stand on their own feet. These animals show symptoms of metabolic disorders, fractures, birth defects or debility. Gyeonggi Province has so far inspected only 1,680 cattle, or 1.3 percent of all the animals slaughtered annually in the province for mad cow disease, but all downer cattle. It therefore permitted their slaughter and sale as beef.

But amid massive protests against U.S. beef imports and public confusion over the distinction between downer cows and animals infected with BSE, the province will increase the number of cattle subject to inspection for mad cow disease to 5,040 animals annually, and buy all downer cattle to process them as industrial oil and fat through high-temperature sterilizing treatment, instead of selling them as beef.

An official said the Gyeonggi provincial government will inspect only six slaughterhouses this year but all 13 slaughterhouses in the province next year to enhance sanitation.

S) South Korean parliament to probe US beef deal

10.jul.08

Lexington Herald-Leader

Jai-Soon Chang

<http://www.kentucky.com/524/story/456342.html>

SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korea's new parliament agreed Thursday to launch a probe into government negotiations with Washington on resumed American beef imports, as it convened for the first time following an opposition boycott over the beef dispute.

The planned inquiry is a blow to President Lee Myung-bak, whose leadership has been significantly undermined by a wave of protests against the beef deal for the past two months. The investigation comes as protests show signs of subsiding, and could rekindle heated public debate.

The probe was a key demand from the main opposition Democratic Party to end its boycott of the National Assembly, which had not convened since lawmakers started a four-year term on May 30. But the ruling Grand National Party agreed earlier this week to accept a probe and parliament is to be formally opened Friday, when President Lee will address lawmakers.

The opposition has claimed that the beef deal, struck in April and amended last month, is flawed because it could expose the country to mad cow disease. The liberal party also has accused the pro-U.S. government of reaching the deal just hours before Lee's first summit with President George W. Bush in an effort to kowtow to Washington.

The presidential office is subject to the investigation, along with the Agriculture Ministry and Foreign Ministry. A special committee will lead the probe until Aug. 20, but it can be extended.

The new parliament also agreed to form five other special committees, including one that will deal with an opposition demand that the country's livestock epidemic prevention law be revised to strengthen precautions against mad cow disease.

South Korea was the third-largest overseas market for U.S. beef until it banned imports after a case of mad cow disease was detected in 2003, the first of three confirmed cases in the United States.

Eating infected beef is linked to a rare but fatal brain disease.

U.S. beef went on sale early this month, but is still not widely available because large supermarket chains and restaurants are reluctant to sell or serve it due to the protests.



Got News?

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