

## **09/07/2003 Entry: "Breakthrough U.S. / Canadian Meat Deal"**

Breakthrough U.S. meat deal  
Slaughterhouse pact allows major shipments to U.S.

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EDMONTON - The Canadian government has struck a crucial deal with the U.S. on the use of slaughterhouses that will finally allow major shipments of Canadian beef south of the border, possibly as early as today.

After a single case of mad cow disease surfaced in Alberta in May, the U.S. demanded that Canada use separate slaughterhouses for older and younger cattle before the Americans would re-open their border to Canadian beef. It is believed that animals under 30 months of age do not develop the brain-destroying disease.

But officials now have reached an agreement in principle which allows Canada to slaughter animals under 30 months of age in the same facilities as older animals.

"This is another milestone," said Rob McNabb, assistant manager of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture official confirmed the two countries reached an agreement Thursday morning on a new segregation system.

The system will allow Cargill Foods Inc. and Lakeside Packers, the two largest beef processing plants in the western provinces, to resume their boneless beef shipments to the U.S.

The Canadian plants will now have the capability of selling to the U.S., while also slaughtering older animals for the domestic market, McNabb said.

"If that didn't happen, then we'd be stuck with finding places that would take those (older) cows."

Ted Haney, president of the Canada Beef Export Federation, said a system of "sequencing, segregation and separate use of equipment," has addressed the Americans' concerns about mixing older and younger animals.

There will be two sets of equipment, Haney said, one for older animals and another for younger ones. In the early part of the day, young animals will be processed. Animals over 30 months of age will be handled later in the day.

"The same line itself is used," Haney said. But "at the end of the day, a complete sanitation of the entire line would be completed, ensuring that at the start of the next day, there's no residue."

Haney said while the deal is a step forward, the precautions are unnecessary.

"This, in no way, is any comment on the risk. This is only about U.S. sensitivities, and their wish to proceed slowly."

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency said Thursday that beef shipments could start moving as early as today.

"There is some relief because this is essentially a turning point for getting back on track for exporting beef products," Claude Boissonneault of the CFIA said from Ottawa.

The U.S. closed its border to Canadian beef on May 20 when it was confirmed that Canada had found a single case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in a cow in northern Alberta.

In early August, the U.S. announced it would accept boneless Canadian beef from animals less than 30 months of age, along with some other cattle products.

Canadian exporters have lost more than \$1 billion since May, after more than 30 countries closed their borders to Canadian beef.

There have been a handful of partial border reopenings following the U.S. decision in August.

Live cattle from Canada remain banned in all countries, however.

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