

## **05/09/2003 Entry: "Implement COOL in an Efficient and Effective Manner, KCA Tells USDA"**

KANSAS CITY, MO. – Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) will allow the United States producer the opportunity to differentiate their product and be competitive in the market place if the program is implemented in an efficient and effective manner. That was the message the Kansas Cattlemen's Association passed on the United States Department of Agriculture during the COOL "listening session" held here May 6th.

In testimony before the USDA, Ashlea Redding, Communications Director for the Kansas Cattlemen's Association said that "Country of Origin Labeling should be implemented in a manner that passes on the least amount on cost possible to the producer and the importer should bear the burden of proof. Label the imports."

Redding said that any live animal coming into the United States is already identified through branding, tagging or other methods and by health papers, while any meat coming into the country in a box is labeled with a country of origin. "Now, continue the labeling process onto the consumer level. Consumers need to know what they're buying and what's more, they want to know!"

The Kansas Cattlemen's Association also pointed out the food safety factor of Country of Origin Labeling. KCA Director Merrill Cauble of Larned, KS discussed imports, noting that in 2002 the United States imported beef from the Netherlands and Spain, countries known to have BSE or Mad Cow Disease. He also caught everyone's attention when he added, "Here in 2003, we have already imported 34,000 plus pounds of beef from Switzerland, a country that reported 24 cases of BSE in 2002 alone. If the packer and the retailer wants to sell the kind of product we're importing, then the product needs to be labeled and the importer should bear the burden of proof."

Cauble concluded his testimony by adding that less than 2% of imports are actually inspected by the Food and Drug Administration.

Approximately 350-500 people attended the Kansas City listening session with around 50 people testifying. Of those 50, about 30 spoke in favor of Country of Origin Labeling, while around 20 opposed the law.

The Kansas Cattlemen's Association is a producer run, grassroots cattlemen's association representing some 1500 members in 20 states.