

12/30/2003 Entry: "R-CALF USA Advises Science Ahead of Politics"

R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America

For Immediate Release Contact John Lockie

December 30, 2003 406-252-2516, johnlockie@r-calfusa.com

R-CALF USA Advises Science Ahead of Politics

(Billings, MT) "We have to place science ahead of politics," said Kathleen Kelley, Vice President of R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA), during a press conference December 29, 2003. Kelley, a rancher from Meeker, CO, stressed that R-CALF USA has the utmost confidence in the United States domestic food production, but that there has been a propensity to place politics ahead of science that has jeopardized not only our food safety but the very foundation to our ag industry. Kelley told participating reporters that R-CALF USA has asked for several emergency measures to insure the U.S. has a zero tolerance for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

On December 23rd R-CALF USA sent a letter to USDA and the President urging them to close the border to importation of all live cattle, beef, and raw and manufactured feed products until this incidence of BSE is fully investigated. Secondly, R-CALF USA is calling on USDA-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to identify all imported live cattle currently in the U.S., particularly all cattle from Canada. The Canadian cattle should be identified, quarantined, and subject to mandatory BSE testing. Third and finally, R-CALF USA asked for an immediate suspension of USDA rules allowing importation of Canadian beef and a suspension of the new rule making to allow importation of Canadian live cattle.

Also participating in the media conference call was DVM Max Thornsberry from Richland, MO, who is R-CALF USA's lead advisor on BSE. Dr. Thornsberry explained that through conversations with APHIS, he was told that APHIS does not actively monitor movement of imported cattle within the U.S. The cattle cross the border with health papers, including a designation of the point of entry, and a metal clip ear tag. APHIS contends that once an animal enters the U.S. it becomes a U.S. animal. Dr. Thornsberry advised APHIS to begin the process of identifying all Canadian cattle currently in the U.S.

R-CALF USA Country of Origin Labeling Committee Chair Danni Beer of Keldron, SD, stated that with the proper implementation of country of origin labeling (COOL), including the permanent marking of all imported livestock, the country of origin of the cow slaughtered in Washington would have been readily evident at processing.

R-CALF USA will continue to work closely with USDA to mitigate any potential harm to consumer confidence in the U.S. food supply and any harm to the U.S. cattle industry and market.