

06/11/2003 Entry: "Ranchers' Group Promotes COOL Solution for Producers and Retailers - USDA-approved label and tracking system provides COOL compliance for everyone."

RYDE, CA - Western Ranchers Beef (WRB), a California based cooperative founded in 1996 by western states ranchers, is pointing out a way producers and retailers alike can lessen the concern and confusion about what records and systems will be needed in order to comply with the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) of meat. As it stands now, on September 30, 2004 it will be mandatory that retailers identify beef, pork and lamb sold in stores (food service is exempt) with its country of origin; not just foreign countries, but the U.S. as well.

A valid concern of retailers is that without an approved trace-back system to prove the animal has spent its entire life in the United States, meat cannot now (or then) be labeled as product of the U.S. WRB is encouraging ranchers across the country to use a simple method its members have been using for two years as part of their WRB Certified Premium Feeder Program. Born & Raised in the USA™ (B&R-USA), founded by Modoc County, California cattleman and WRB member, Carolyn Carey, is the one USDA-approved meat label that also provides a ranch to retail verification system for all U.S. beef (and pork, lamb, fish and game). It is an easy, inexpensive system that should easily make the transition to a mandatory system.

If you are a U.S. producer, you can enroll your animals now. With all the confusion and conflicting information that surrounds COOL, WRB directors are promoting B&R-USA as "an insurance policy." Those producers who sign up with B&R-USA now won't have to worry; their cattle will already be part of a U.S. meat trace-back system, with verification and USDA compliance provided by B&R-USA. "This takes the uncertainty out of it for everyone during this transition period," says Darrell Wood, WRB member and long-time user of the program. "For fifty cents a head you'll be in compliance ... no matter what the regulators come up with," adds Dan Byrd of Byrd Cattle Company, Red Bluff, California. Cow/ calf producers Tom and Sharon Clark of Napa, California say that, "Ear tags are optional in the Born & Raised program, but we use them anyway because we like the idea of hanging a US flag on our calves."

Retailers can also sign up now to put a USA label on Born & Raised in the USA™ source-verified meat, and be assured that "ranch to retail" USDA trace-back is provided for them by B&R-USA. The attractive flag logo is also the meat label. "It's cheap - two tenths of a cent per pound, and the burden of compliance is on B&R-USA ... you can't beat it," offers John Wood of Grassland Beef, LLC in Monticello, Missouri.

For more information contact Born & Raised in the USA™ at P.O. Box 1880, Alturas, CA 96101, or call toll-free 1-866-564-2370.

