

## **06/11/2003 Entry: "Report on Billings, MT, USDA Listening Session"**

R-CALF USA just returned from the USDA COOL listening and education session in Billings, MT. This meeting was OVERWHELMINGLY controlled by COOL supporters - approximately 80 testimonies for, 9 against. The meeting was attended by 400-450 people - standing room only. The tide is in our favor and we must keep the enthusiasm and support growing for the remainder of the meetings.

Every state and local association from MT, ND, and SD in attendance spoke strongly in favor of COOL. Over 100 witnesses signed in but testimony was cut off at 4:00 p.m. The majority of presenters asked USDA to use the "presumption of domestic origin" along with requiring the foreign markings on all imported livestock as the system to verify the origins of livestock.

The only opponents were the ones who have been following USDA around: AMI, Exell, Colorado Beef, NCBA. These opponents are making no effort to persuade USDA. Their objective is to instill fear, doubt, and uncertainty in the minds of the audience.

Based on this realization, R-CALF USA will attend each of the remaining Listening Sessions to counter this handful of opponents. I will be in Sacramento on June 12. If other ACOL members are able to travel, I would strongly urge you to try and attend these sessions. The momentum is on our side, we are effectively preempting the opposition's attempts to change public opinion, and USDA is finding far more COOL support than they imagined. ACOL must continue its aggressive leadership!

Attached please find our responses to USDA's Q&A available on the AMS website. We submitted this as testimony today.