

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

Grassley, Nelson Say Stalling on BSE Rule Hurts U.S. Beef Producers, Exports

WASHINGTON – Senators Chuck Grassley of Iowa and Ben Nelson of Nebraska are leading a bipartisan group of 31 senators pressing the administration to issue a comprehensive BSE rule. The rule has been in the works for several years, but is currently stalled within the Office of Management and Budget.

In 2004, USDA announced its plans for developing a comprehensive BSE rule, a comprehensive rule the U.S. beef industry has requested for many years. Earlier this year, APHIS submitted a proposed comprehensive BSE rule to OMB, but it has yet to be printed in the “Federal Register” asking for public comment.

In the senators’ letter to Office of Management and Budget Acting Director Jeffrey Zients and Animal Plant Health and Inspection Services Administrator, Dr. Gregory Parham, the senators asked them to issue the BSE comprehensive rule as soon as possible.

“Operating without a comprehensive rule has put our trade negotiators in a tough spot. On one hand they are urging our trading partners to abide by scientific standards, yet we have failed to lead by example by adopting a comprehensive rule,” Grassley said. “These are important rules that can provide a tremendous boost to our beef producers by ensuring their export markets remain open.”

“Today, overseas markets are more important than ever for America’s beef producers, including those in my state of Nebraska. Adopting a comprehensive BSE rule will help them by giving our trade negotiators a stronger hand in advocating for U.S. beef. And it will demonstrate to overseas markets the U.S. is leading the way on food safety as it offers nutritious and healthful beef products,” Nelson said.

The letter was signed by Grassley and Nelson along with senators John Barrasso of Wyoming, Mike Johanns of Nebraska, Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, Roy Blunt of Missouri, Mike Crapo of Idaho, Mike Enzi of Wyoming, Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, Dick Lugar of Indiana, Jim Moran of Kansas, John Boozman of Arkansas, John Risch of Idaho, Rob Portman of Ohio, Dan Coats of Indiana, Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, John Thune of South Dakota, Johnny Isakson of Georgia, Kent Conrad of North Dakota, Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, Michael Bennet of Colorado, Mark Pryor of Arkansas, Mark Udall of Colorado, Maria

Cantwell of Washington, Patty Murray of Washington, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, John Cornyn of Texas, Pat Roberts of Kansas, Marco Rubio of Florida and Tom Harkin of Iowa.

Here is a copy of the text of the letter.

February 13, 2012

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dr. [Gregory Parham](#)  
Administrator  
Animal Plant Health and Inspection Services  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Acting Director Zients and Administrator Parham:

On behalf of America's beef producers, we urge you to move forward and publish the comprehensive rule for BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). Non-tariff trade barriers limit our ability to sell U.S. beef to consumers in other countries. Beef producers need our trade negotiators to significantly reduce or eliminate non-tariff trade barriers by requiring our trading partners to make science-based decisions regarding U.S. beef. By the same logic, it is also important for our government to take the necessary steps to properly address risks related to BSE by adopting a comprehensive rule. For the benefit of U.S. beef producers, APHIS and OMB must issue a comprehensive BSE rule as soon as possible.

A prime example of where non-science based standards have significantly limited our ability to sell U.S. beef is in the country of Mexico. Since 2004, Mexico has not allowed the importation of U.S. cattle that are over 30 months of age. Mexico has traditionally been one of the top export markets for U.S. beef; however, due to the 30 month age restriction, it is estimated U.S. beef producers are losing \$100 million annually.

The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) has formally classified the United States and Mexico as controlled risk countries. According to the OIE's guidelines on BSE, this common

classification reflects the fact that both countries have effective BSE risk mitigation measures in place. Moreover, the OIE guidelines establish that beef and beef products from cattle of all ages in either country can be safely traded and consumed once specified risk materials have been properly removed.

The failure of Mexico to abide by the international guidelines on BSE represents a lost opportunity on at least two levels. First, it unduly restricts U.S. beef exports and results in ongoing financial losses for U.S. beef producers. Beyond its immediate commercial impact, Mexico's treatment of U.S. beef also has implications on our ability to negotiate beef market access agreements with other nations.

By having a comprehensive BSE rule in place, the U.S. will show leadership on the global scale and will give USTR and USDA a stronger position to press other nations to follow the OIE's guidelines and adopt science-based BSE policies. As a result, when nations base their decisions on sound science, we are confident more markets will be expanded or opened to U.S. beef.

In 2004, USDA announced its plans for developing a comprehensive BSE rule, a comprehensive rule the U.S. beef industry has requested for many years. Earlier this year, APHIS submitted a proposed comprehensive BSE rule to OMB, but it has yet to be printed in the "Federal Register" asking for public comment. During a June 23, 2011 hearing on livestock before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, Administrator Parham stated he expected the comprehensive BSE rule to be released sometime in FY2012.

We appreciate Administrator Parham's commitment; however, there is a lot of time left in fiscal year 2012. We urge you to release the rule as soon as possible. The sooner the rule is allowed to move through the required rule-making process, the sooner we will be able to give our international negotiators this important tool for pushing our trading partners to adopt similar science-based approaches.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,