



## US Beef Industry Facts

- 35 million cattle are commercially slaughtered each year – last year 20,526 of these cattle were tested for mad cow disease.
  - Only 9 percent of downer cattle (animals that cannot walk, exhibit symptoms of neurological disease, and/or that die or are killed for reasons other than routine slaughter) are tested in the United States compared to 100 percent in the European Union and Japan. <sup>1</sup>
  - Cattle viewed as unable to walk outside of slaughterhouses, or have other signs of brain disease, are to be ruled unfit for human consumption and sent to a rendering plant. This includes the brain and spinal cord, the most infectious tissue. At rendering plants, slaughter by-products and diseased animals are turned into protein feed, oils and other products.
  - Under FDA (Food and Drug Administration) regulations issued in 1997, it is illegal to feed protein made from cows, sheep, deer, and other so-called ruminants to other ruminants. As of January 2004, beef blood and beef fat are no longer permitted in calf feed. But it is still legal to feed rendered cattle protein to pigs, chickens, and other animals. Those animals in turn can be rendered and fed to cows or sheep. <sup>2</sup>
  - Livestock feed plants are inspected by the FDA. However, in 2001, the FDA was so short of inspectors that nearly a third of the country's 10,000 feed plants were not inspected. <sup>3</sup>
  - Some scientists have suggested a possible link between rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone) – a controversial, genetically-engineered drug which forces dairy cows to produce more milk – and mad-cow safety concerns. Cows treated with rBGH need to consume more protein, and this is often in the form of “rendered animal protein,” making the cattle more susceptible to mad cow disease. <sup>4</sup>
  - Countries such as Japan are insisting on 100% testing of slaughtered cattle. The Bush administration's refusal to satisfy this request is forcing some U.S. meatpackers to lay off workers. The borders of more than 50 countries remain closed to American beef exports, which last year totaled about \$3 billion. <sup>5</sup>
  - A total of 300 U.S. companies are in violation of federal regulations meant to prevent mad cow disease. These regulations include keeping feed made with cattle parts separate from feed for cattle and labeling feed with the banned material. The data comes from FDA's own database of animal feed company inspection records updated in October 2003 for the first time in 17 months. The number of companies violating the law is more than double the number listed by the FDA in April 2002. <sup>6</sup>
  - Of the 300 firms in violation of FDA regulations, 173 handle or distribute prohibited materials. 32 of these handle both prohibited materials and ruminant feed, making them the most likely firms to spread mad cow disease. Additionally, 1,779 records out of 11,172 have no listing of any action taken by the FDA after it completed its own inspection. <sup>7</sup>
  - On May 13, 2002, President Bush signed into law the 2002 “Farm Bill,” which included an initiative requiring country of origin labeling (“COOL”) for beef, lamb, pork, fish, perishable agricultural commodities and peanuts. In October 2003, the USDA issued a proposed rule for mandatory COOL. In December, the US Department of Agriculture extended the comment period to February 27, 2004. This program still has not been implemented. <sup>8</sup>
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**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Friends of the Earth (FOE). "Mad Cow Prevention Rules Violated by 300 Companies. FDA Asked to Take Action to Protect Public Health and Farmers." October 10, 2003. <http://www.foe.org/new/releases/1003madcow.html>

<sup>2</sup> Burros, Marian, and Donald G. McNeil Jr. "U.S. Inspections for Disease Lag Behind Those Abroad." New York Times, December 24, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Burros and McNeil.

<sup>4</sup> Rampton, Sheldon, and John Stauber. *Mad Cow U.S.A. – Could the Nightmare Happen Here?* Maine: Common Courage Press, p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> Kilman, Scott. "USDA Prohibits Mad-Cow Tests By Outside Labs, Causing Outcry." *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2004. <http://www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/testing031104.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> FOE.

<sup>7</sup> FOE.

<sup>8</sup> Agricultural Marketing Service @ USDA <http://www.ams.usda.gov/cool>