



May 23, 2003

Dear NASDA Members:

As you are aware, one cow in Canada tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) this week. With this information, USDA decided to place a prohibition on the importation of all live ruminants (such as cattle, sheep, goats, and cervids), ruminant meat, ruminant meat products, and other ruminant products from Canada. As the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) learns more about the case of BSE in Canada, the restrictions placed on Canadian imports will be re-evaluated.

APHIS has been very helpful to NASDA members this week by scheduling two conference calls and providing the latest information about the investigation in Canada. As APHIS and other federal agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration and Food Safety Inspection Service, conduct the investigation in cooperation with Canadian officials, it is imperative that USDA continue to keep NASDA members informed so that each state can keep stakeholders informed, such as state legislators and state animal agriculture organizations. A conference call with APHIS is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 27. I urge you to join the call and to scan your e-mail messages early next week for details about the call.

Since this situation is under investigation and further details are needed to confirm that this is an isolated case of BSE, I request that NASDA members remain patient during this investigation and allow APHIS and its fellow federal agencies to handle decisions related to the movement of ruminants and products derived from ruminants. It is requested that NASDA members take no immediate action without USDA developing a better-defined situation. Unilateral actions could impact the overall success of the investigation and could inadvertently impact our industries and international trade.

I would like to remind you that USDA has a BSE Response Plan (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/bse/bseum.pdf>) and continues to carry out its BSE Surveillance Program (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/bse/bse-surveillance.html>). We should remain confident that under the leadership of Secretary Ann Veneman, Under Secretary Bill Hawks, and APHIS Administrator Bobby Acord that USDA will guide our country through this situation and will ask for our help when it is necessary.

A step that can be taken immediately by each commissioner, secretary and director is to provide an emergency contact phone number to NASDA staff so that you or your key contact person could be reached in an emergency. This is a voluntary request but I hope you can cooperate and provide a phone number. The number may be one of your direct numbers or the number of a key member of your staff. Please provide that information to Jennifer Yezak Molen by e-mail at Jennifer@nasda.org or by phone at 202-296-9680, ext. 211 or her cell phone at 202-607-4309 as soon as possible.

I thank you all for your cooperation and dedication in serving the agriculture industry and working with our federal partners.

Sincerely,

Patrick A. Takasugi,
NASDA President
Secretary, Idaho Department of Agriculture

