

MINUTES OF THE SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Taddiken at 8:30 A.M. on March 1, 2005 in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Marci Francisco- excused
Steve Morris- excused
Derek Schmidt- excused

Committee staff present:

Raney Gilliland, Legislative Research Department
Lisa Montgomery, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Jacqui Jones, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Dan Howell (for Donn Teske, President), Kansas Farmers Union (KFU)
Don Hineman, Past President, Kansas Livestock Association (KLA)
Doran Junek, Executive Director, Kansas Cattlemen's Association (KCA)
Brad Harrelson, State Policy Director - Governmental Relations, Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB)
Adrian Polansky, Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) -(written only)

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Taddiken opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. advising the Committee members that minutes of February 15 and 16, 2005 were available to read and would be eligible for an approval vote at the end of the meeting.

Chairman Taddiken then requested that Dan Howell speak for Donn Teske, President of the Kansas Farmers Union on **HCR5005 - Concurrent resolution by Agriculture urging USDA to delay the lifting of the ban on importation of Canadian beef.**

In his opening remarks Mr. Howell said that KFU would have preferred the language in the original concurrent resolution but, in order to meet the March 7 deadline for the Canadian border to be opened, they supported the amended resolution to allow it to pass through the Senate and go on to Washington, D.C.

KFU feels that the Canadian beef import issue is very important and a serious factor for its cattle producing members. The American buying public does not seem to be affected by this issue at the present time, despite the fact that 47 countries are maintaining a ban on imports from the U.S.

KFU stated that if the Canadian border is opened before the U.S. is convinced that there is no threat to American consumers, it will undermine the confidence America has shown in our food safety up to this point in time. KFU believes that opening the Canadian border, before US markets are opened overseas, is irresponsible and will affect the precarious balance in supply and demand.

The Union believes that the restriction on imports of Canadian beef has been a significant factor in the recent profitability of the beef industry. Opening the border before U.S. exports are allowed to be exported will create a serious problem for America's cattle industry.

After referring members of the Committee to a "Special Order of Business" to Rescind "Final Order to Reopen Canadian Border" in his written testimony (see attachment 1), Mr. Howell stood for questions.

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MINUTES OF THE Senate Agriculture Committee at 8:30 A.M. on March 1, 2005 in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

Chairman Taddiken then asked Don Hineman to speak on behalf of the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA).

Mr. Hineman spoke in support of **HCR-5005**. He said that he had been a member of a recent trade delegation to Canada sent by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) to examine Canada's beef cattle production system. The trade delegation sought answers to questions from members of NCBA regarding the final rule from USDA which would allow importation of cattle from Canada, and the discovery of two new cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a Canadian cow herd.

He then explained to the Committee some of the control mechanisms that are internationally recognized as effective and adequate to control and eventually eradicate BSE (See attachment #2).

The team was to assess the effectiveness of Canada's control efforts to control specified risk materials (SRMs) in four areas cited. SRMs are tissues that, in BSE infected cattle, contain the agent that may transmit the disease. After touring meat packing plants and discussions with industry and government officials it was confirmed that similar procedures were in place at all Canadian plants. The team conclusion was that Canada was effectively removing SRMs and thereby protecting public health.

The Canadian ruminant feed ban is comparable both in procedure and application to the U.S. feed ban, and is adequate to prevent the spread of BSE.

The surveillance protocol is similar to that in the United States, and the Canadian surveillance program appears to be on track to meet its targets and to provide a science-based assessment of disease prevalence.

The vast majority of cattle imported to Canada originated from countries where BSE has not been reported in the native population.

Detailed statistics were available regarding cattle and beef for export by Canada (see attachment 2-2 to 2-4). Questions about the Beef Trade were attached (see attachments 2-5 & 2-6).

Mr. Hineman then stood for questions.

Chairman Taddiken then invited Doran Junek to give his testimony on behalf of the Kansas Cattlemen's Association.

Mr. Junek said that the Association had grave concerns about opening the Canadian border to live cattle on March 7, 2005. The concerns were listed in his testimony (see attachment 3). A detailed description was given regarding the spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) - (see attachment 3-1) and that a message be sent to the President and leaders in Washington to support and delay the lifting of the requirements to open the border to Canadian live cattle on March 7, 2005.

At that time, Mr. Junek stood for questions from the Committee.

Brad Harrelson spoke on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB). He provided testimony in support of **HCR-5005**. He stated that KFB is concerned about reopening markets on our domestic beef industry. KFB has urged the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to use measures and protocols to open markets in an orderly way to ensure consumer confidence and enhance the beef industry.

The Committee should not forget that US trading partners are monitoring our position regarding this rule, and that they will likely apply the same principles to this country as we try to normalize trade following the December 2003 case of BSE. The United States expects trading partners to base their decisions to trade with us on science, and we must do the same.

KFB urged the Committee to support **HCR-5005**. Mr. Harrelson then stood for questions.

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Written testimony was received from Adrian Polansky, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA).

In his testimony Secretary Polansky explained that a team of USDA experts found that Canada's feed regulations and its enforcement is comparable to the that of the United States. He also feels that experts will confirm that Canada's BSE surveillance is comparable to that of the U.S. He feels that there are economic disadvantages in keeping the border closed. He explained further that Canada continues to build more processing facilities and eventually will find no benefit in sending cattle to the U.S. for feeding and processing (See attachment 5).

Chairman Taddiken closed the hearing on **HCR-5005**.

Senator Huelskamp moved and Senator Pine seconded the motion that HCR-5005 be passed favorably. The motion passed unanimously.

Upon a motion by Senator Huelskamp and seconded by Senator Bruce the minutes of February 15 and February 16, 2005 were unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 2, 2005.