



NEWS RELEASE • Ohio Department of Agriculture



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Ohio Agriculture Director Strengthens State Meat Inspection Policy

REYNOLDSBURG – Ohio Agriculture Director Fred L. Dailey today announced policy changes in Ohio's state meat inspection program to ban non-ambulatory, disabled (downer) cattle from slaughter for human consumption. In addition, meat processors will now be required to hold the meat of animals being tested for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as “mad cow disease,” until test results are confirmed negative. The state policies mirror those outlined by U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman on Dec. 30.

“Nothing is more important to our farmers and ranchers than maintaining consumer confidence in our food supply,” Dailey said. “These policy initiatives will further ensure that our domestic beef supply is safe, wholesome, and unadulterated.”

Dailey outlined the following policy directives, which will apply to both fully inspected and custom licensed state meat processing establishments:

- All non-ambulatory, disabled cattle and calves are ineligible for use as human food. Non-ambulatory livestock is defined by USDA as “livestock that cannot rise from a recumbent position or that cannot walk, including, but not limited to, those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, or metabolic disease.” A meat inspector or veterinarian would make this determination during a standard pre-slaughter (ante-mortem) examination. Such animals would be condemned and disposed of by an approved method.
- Meat processors must hold meat while tissue samples of animals are routinely tested. Any cattle or calves examined by the veterinarian and judged to be suspect for disease may be slaughtered, but the meat of any animal subject to evaluation must be retained while the test result is pending. Existing regulations already require animals exhibiting central nervous system symptoms to be condemned and declared unfit for human consumption. The Ohio Department of Agriculture will continue to collect tissue samples for USDA evaluation for BSE.
- Specified risk materials, including brain and spinal cord in cattle over 30 months of age, will be considered unfit for human consumption. Tonsils and the lower portion of the small intestine from cattle of any age will also be banned from human consumption.

These policy initiatives will be strictly enforced by ODA's Division of Meat Industry, which employs 117 state meat inspectors and veterinarians.

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Note to Editor: To read the full announcement by USDA, go to www.ohioagriculture.gov.