

9.11.2009

The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural
And Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Impact and Consequences of Government decision to relax import restrictions on beef from countries which have had BSE

Dear Sir

It is difficult to believe that the Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) which we believe is funded by the various State farming organizations, together with various lobby groups have agreed to support the Government in its lifting from March 2010 the blanket ban covering the importation of beef and beef products into Australia from countries which have been infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or Mad cow disease). This without any consultation with those who will be most effected, the Australian beef producers.

We belong to two cattle organizations and our opinion was never sought, nor was this proposed action put to a vote. The first we knew was an announcement in the media that the ban was to be lifted.

Apparently the CCA believes removing the ban will avoid the World Trade Organization pulling Australian beef from the shelves if there is an outbreak here, but if this is the case it will be axiomatic that people will not buy Australian beef, the fear would be too great.

We have been advised this disease can appear from nowhere for no apparent reason, but surely if beef is imported from countries which have had this disease the likelihood of an outbreak must become more likely?

The outbreak of BSE in the UK (as well, of course, in other countries) was a total disaster which effected not only that country but their customers. Australia's beef is accepted everywhere because it is free of disease such as BSE and FMD.

It is obvious it does not have much to do with health and everything to do with trade, particularly when we are told the Government is also talking of replacing anti-dumping legislation.

Can it be guaranteed that Australian herds will not be effected by BSE should the lifting of this ban occur?

Blood donors who previously gave blood to the Australian blood bank are now no longer able to do so if they were in the UK for 6 months during the period 1980 – 1995.

We, along with many other beef producers, are opposed to the Government's proposed action which could wipe out beef producers and a valuable export industry, which will become even more valuable after the introduction of CPRS.

Yours faithfully
LM & PC Webb

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Webb', written in a cursive style.