



BSE, Bluetongue Discussed

by **Troy Smith**

Seedstock producers expressed frustration over Canadian bluetongue regulations prohibiting import of U.S. breeding animals to Canada.

DENVER, CO (Feb. 2, 2006) — Born of NCBA's Animal Health and Well-being Committee, the U.S./Canada Issues Working Group has concerned itself primarily with animal health issues affecting movement of cattle across the U.S.-Canada border. Members spent a majority of their time discussing the countries' respective policies related to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and bluetongue disease.

BSE situation update

Noel Murray, of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Animal Health and Production Division, offered details about Canada's most recent case of BSE. Discovered in January, the Holstein-Hereford crossbred cow was born in April 2000 and lived its entire life on the same farm. Murray said Canadian officials have followed international standards for tracing and identifying cohort animals and progeny of the affected cow.

The age of the animal indicates she was born after implementation of Canada's ban on use of ruminant byproducts in feed. The feed ban, Murray said, was implemented in 1997. However, existing feed supplies were not recalled. That left a potential opportunity for BSE

transmission, which may explain the latest case.

"It shows that the feed ban was imperfect," Murray stated. "Finding an additional case does not mean BSE is on the increase. It does mean the sensitivity of our surveillance is increasing."

Murray said it is reassuring that so few cases — three affected animals in three years — have been found out of 85,000 animals tested. He said the ban has effectively limited opportunities of exposure but Canada is fine-tuning its surveillance program and considering a ban on using specific risk materials in any animal feed or fertilizer.

Bluetongue frustrations

U.S. seedstock breeders present expressed frustration over Canadian bluetongue regulations prohibiting import of U.S. breeding animals to Canada. They noted how provisions exist for movement of feeder cattle across the border and no scientific evidence supports prohibition of breeding stock. Their frustration was heightened by the belief that the bluetongue issue had been settled last March.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency representative Dennis

Laycraft echoed frustration, agreeing that no valid reasoning justified the prohibition rule. Laycraft called it a “temporary hiccup” in procedures, blaming the situation on the recent change of government in Canada.

Laycraft said the rule remains in place against the advice of the agency, and the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association also is applying pressure to correct the situation.



Editor's Note: This article was written under contract or by staff of Angus Productions Inc. (API), which claims copyright to this material. It may not be published or distributed without the express permission of Angus Productions Inc. (API). To request reprint permission and guidelines, contact Shauna Rose Hermel, editor, at (816) 383-5270 or shermel@angusjournal.com.