



NATIONAL MEAT ASSOCIATION®

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June 13, 2005

The Honorable Michael Johanns
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

NMA recognizes the difficult situation that has occurred with respect to re-testing samples of material for BSE that came from three inconclusive tests out of more than 375,000 sampled units. Again, with great respect for your position, it is our responsibility to raise the issue as to the authority of the Inspector General to direct this additional testing. We would appreciate your clarification as to the authority of the Inspector General to direct testing which is a deviation from publicly-stated and science-based protocols announced just one year ago on the implementation of the expanded surveillance program.

NMA strongly supports science-based policies. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with USDA on this principle. If peer-reviewed science supports the use of yet another and possibly better test for final determination of BSE, then we would fully expect the USDA to announce changed testing protocols, and to accept science-based comments on the change before implementation.

However, to change the rules for testing retroactively at the direction of the Office of Inspector General and only announce that this has been done when one of the three samples, run with the different method and protocol, is determined to be a "weak positive," is just not the practice of sound policy or sound science that we expect from the USDA.

Please know, Mr. Secretary, that NMA will continue to support science-driven policies. As always, NMA is here to work and cooperate with you and your agencies.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Mucklow
Executive Director