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**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE  
MANITOBA BEEF PACKING CO-OP**

**ROSSENDALE, Man.**—“The BSE-triggered border closure demonstrates the urgent need for a new beef packing plant in Manitoba. With government and farmer co-operation, such a plant is easily within reach,” said NFU member and Manitoba cattle farmer Fred Tait.

The most pressing need in Manitoba is for a medium-sized plant that will handle older, culled cows. Manitoba has about 600,000 cows. About 10%, or 60,000, are culled and slaughtered in a normal year. “The market for older cattle remains precarious, and this may be a permanent situation. We need a plant in Manitoba to process these cattle,” said Tait.

A medium-sized packing plant that could handle 250 cows per day for about 250 days per year would have a total capacity of about 60,000 head per year.

The cost of such a plant would be several million dollars. The NFU proposes that Manitoba farmers would pay a \$10 per head fee on all cattle they sell to finance the farmer-owned co-operative plant. A \$10 per head fee would raise more than \$5 million per year in Manitoba to finance the construction and guarantee the ongoing viability of the slaughter plant.

“The Manitoba government should accelerate the plant’s construction by advancing a \$12 million loan to a farmer co-op. The Manitoba government has previously shown a willingness to fund slaughter facilities and potato plants in the province. And recently it promised millions to the ethanol industry,” said Tait.

NFU Manitoba Co-ordinator and Swan River-area farmer Ken Sigurdson noted that: “The Manitoba government has offered support to a scheme to kill and bury 50,000 Manitoba cows. The NFU’s proposal is vastly superior.”

In addition to providing local processing capacity, there are other advantages to the farmer-owned co-op. Farmers could sell directly to the co-op, with savings on livestock-yard commissions and other costs. A farmer co-op could also coordinate trucking among several farmers, saving transportation costs and stress on animals.

Manitoba has 35,000 producing milk cows. A significant number of those cows are culled each year. “A local market for culled cows is essential to the profitability of our dairy farmers,” said Sigurdson.

“With 3/4 of Canadian cattle slaughter capacity concentrated in the hands of two U.S.-based transnationals and located in Alberta, farmers need additional, local options in livestock markets. A farmer-owned culled-cow facility in Manitoba would bring numerous benefits to farmers and the provincial economy. This is our chance to bring the packing industry back to Manitoba and ‘back to Canada’,” concluded Sigurdson.

The NFU has asked for a meeting with the Manitoba government to discuss the construction of a farmer-owned packing plant. The NFU will press for a farmer-vote on the proposal.

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