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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**JUNE 18, 2003**

**INAPPROPRIATE REGULATION WIPING OUT SMALL ABATTOIRS  
AND DECREASING CONSUMER CHOICE**

**STRATFORD, Ont.**—"The loss of small abattoirs does not merely mean the loss of local businesses and employment: the loss of these operations threatens the survival of family farms. Further, the loss of abattoirs threatens local food security and the right of consumers to know and to choose how and where their meat is produced," said Dave Pullen, President of the Perth-Oxford Local of the NFU.

Pullen was speaking today at a Stratford meeting organized by the NFU to find strategies to stop the loss of small abattoirs in Ontario. Ontario has lost approximately 40% of its small abattoirs since 1991. The NFU has called for immediate action by the provincial government to prevent the destruction of small meat processors in Ontario (see backgrounder).

The NFU strongly supports enhanced food safety regulations and a strengthened inspection system, but it fears that many of the regulations being imposed on small abattoirs are more appropriate to large packing plants and that inappropriate regulations are forcing small operators out of business. Bob Passmore, NFU member and beef farmer said, "With sensible regulations, small abattoirs can thrive and provide safe, local food."

Passmore also said, "Small abattoirs are willing and able to cater to speciality markets like certified organic. There is a growing segment of the population that needs speciality meats due to health problems like chronic fatigue syndrome or tetracycline sensitivity."

NFU member Bruce Hunter said, "The very best way to challenge market concentration is for farmers to create a partnership with the end users of their products. My own personal experience has led me to believe that the best way to bring agriculture back into some kind of balance between producer and consumer is through direct marketing. Without local abattoirs, direct marketing and farmer-consumer partnerships are impossible."

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## **Backgrounder to the NFU's June 18, 2003 news release**

The NFU has proposed several measures that will nurture small abattoirs and support the communities and farmers that rely on them. These proposals include:

- training programs for aspiring meat cutters and butchers;
- better treatment of contract inspectors and reinstatement of experienced salaried positions specific to small plants;
- creation of incentive programs for small plants to meet standards or transfer ownership and incentives to start new plants;
- standards and inspectors tailored to small plants; and
- immediate assistance to plants to deal with rendering crisis due to BSE.

While regulations targeted to large meat packing plants are wiping out small abattoirs, at the same time, the government is to weaken the meat inspection and safety system as a whole. In Ontario, between 1991 to 2001:

- The number of full-time inspectors decreased from 142 to 8;
- The number of contract inspectors increased from 38 to 120;
- The number of animals slaughtered went from 5.8 million to 9.9 million; and
- The number of inspection hours decreased from about 177,000 to 132,000.

In Ontario, between 1991 to 2001, the number of inspected packing plants in Ontario decreased from 351 to approximately 200.