

National Office
2717 Wentz Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask., S7K 4B6
Tel (306) 652-9465
Fax (306) 664-6226



national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 7, 2003

MESSAGES OF SOLIDARITY FOR CATTLE FARMERS

SASKATOON, Sask.—“Farm families from cross Canada are concerned for the cattle farmers suffering because of the U.S. beef import embargo,” said Marie Hendricken, an NFU leader and potato farmer from Prince Edward Island. Hendricken came to Saskatchewan to participate in a farm women’s meeting. Farmers from several provinces and who produce many different food products brought messages of solidarity for western cattle farmers hard hit by the BSE crisis.

“As potato farmers from the Maritimes, we know from our experience with the PVYn problem just what you are going through. We’ve been there,” said Hendricken.

In 1991, the Americans closed the border to Maritime potatoes on the basis of one positive test for the potato virus PVYn. Hendricken said, “Despite our best eradication efforts, many more tests, and even evidence that they had the virus in their own production, U.S. officials refused to budge. When the smoke finally cleared it turned out we hadn’t even had the disease (the initial test had been faulty). By then, however, the damage had been done—many island potato farmers had lost their farms. It was devastating. All this occurred as a result of a totally unreasonable U.S. reaction against Canadian farmers.”

Hendricken was not alone in bringing a message of moral support for cattle farmers. PEI Minister of Agriculture Mitchell Murphy sent along a letter expressing his government’s concern. Noting that Canada has very good systems in place to “protect the health of food we produce and market” Minister Murphy wrote: “I know first hand from our past experiences in PEI the pain and suffering that takes place in farm families when their business is interrupted and people feel that they are out of control. I hope that progress is soon made with our US trading partners and I hope that the support governments are offering to cattle producers will help....I want you to know that I am committed to pushing for a resolution as soon as possible.”

Speaking from her experience, Marie Hendricken urged the federal government to “make sure that it focuses its support on helping family farmers stay in business during the BSE crisis. In the PVYn case, government compensation was inadequate and came too late for many PEI farm families. Don’t make that mistake twice. And don’t let unreasonable and harsh U.S. trade actions ruin Canadian farmers.”

— 30 —

For More Information:

Marie Hendricken, PEI NFU member

and former Women’s Vice-President: (902) 676-2849

Darrin Qualman, NFU Executive Secretary: (306) 652-9465