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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BSE TESTING VITAL AND AFFORDABLE

SASKATOON, Sask.—“Testing for BSE would add less than a penny to the cost of a hamburger. BSE testing is completely affordable and is vital if we are to restore consumer confidence, re-open markets, and end the instability and uncertainty that grips Canadian cattle farmers,” said NFU President Stewart Wells.

France and many other European Union countries test all cattle over 30 months of age for BSE. The NFU has obtained cost estimates from a number of U.S. and European sources. BSE test costs range from about 5 cents to 9 cents [Canadian \$] per pound of dressed meat, or about \$30 to \$55 per animal.

In an August 2003 letter to Prime Minister Jean Chretien, the NFU recommended that Canada learn from the experience of European nations and implement testing regimens similar to those countries—test all cattle over 30 months of age for BSE.

Cattle over 30 months of age represent less than 20% of cattle slaughtered each year in Canada and North America. “Paying even 9 cents per pound on 20% of our cattle works out to just 2 cents per pound overall— less than one penny per burger!” said Wells. He continued: “It is inconceivable that we would try to save that penny and put at risk the health of Canadians and the future of our family farms.”

Wells noted that French farmers, retailers, and consumers seem to be very happy with the mandatory testing in the EU. “Canadian consumers would be happy to spend an extra penny on a hamburger if that penny bought them peace of mind,” said Wells.

Wells concluded: “Markets and consumers hate uncertainty. Let's take the uncertainty out of the BSE situation and test all cattle over 30 months.”

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