

National Office  
2717 Wentz Ave.  
Saskatoon, Sask.  
S7K 4B6  
Tel (306) 652-9465  
Fax (306) 664-6226  
E-Mail: nfu@nfu.ca



**national farmers union**

***In Union Is Strength***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**APRIL 22, 2005**

## **BEEF DONATION TO FOOD BANK ILLUSTRATES MARKET DYSFUNCTION**

**RIMBEY, Alberta** – The Parkland Food Bank in Spruce Grove, Alberta will receive a donation of beef with an estimated retail value of approximately \$2500 courtesy of the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Alberta Government.

The donation, to be made next week, is aimed at drawing attention to the continuing plight of farmers facing depressed prices and limited options for marketing older cattle, according to NFU Alberta Coordinator Jan Slomp. The action is also aimed at encouraging the Alberta government to provide increased support for independent, Canadian-owned co-operative processing facilities.

The food bank is located in Alberta Agriculture Minister Doug Horner's riding of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. The shipment of cut and wrapped beef is coming from a 2000-pound cull cow which was originally donated by Slomp to Horner during a meeting at the Alberta Legislature in December, 2004. The NFU organized a much-publicized rally on the steps of the Legislature to protest low livestock prices caused by corporate concentration in the market.

Horner indicated at that meeting that conflict-of-interest guidelines prevented him from accepting the cow, dubbed "Les Miserables 2004". It was agreed the donation would be made to a food bank in Horner's riding. However, due to a shortage of slaughter facilities for cull animals, the donated cow was temporarily housed back on Slomp's farm in Rimbey until space opened up in a plant in Innisfail, near Calgary.

"The fact that there were no facilities to process the cow back in December helped bring the reality of what farmers are facing every day into sharp focus," said Slomp. "We are paying to keep cows on the farm, with little or no money coming in. I have been feeding the Minister's cow for about 130 days, at a cost of approximately \$1.50 per day, not counting management fees and overhead costs." Slomp presented an invoice for \$227.50 to the Minister's office to cover feed costs. The Alberta government is also covering the cost of cutting, wrapping and shipping the meat to the food bank.

The beef from the cull cow, which was raised without using hormones or feed additives, is considered top-quality meat. "Under better market conditions, this

beef could fetch a premium because it's the kind of meat consumers favour," said Slomp. But in the current depressed market, the animal would be worth only about 25 cents pound at the auction mart, returning to the farmer between \$400 and \$500. Two years ago an animal like that would have been worth over \$1000.

Slomp said the issues raised by the NFU at the meeting with the Minister of Agriculture last December have grown worse in the intervening months. XL Foods' monopoly in the cull cow market has kept prices depressed. In addition, two US-owned companies, Cargill and Tyson, dominate the market for younger animals and are making excessive profits while prices at the farm gate are at record lows.

- 30 -

*Contact: Jan Slomp, NFU Alberta Coordinator (403) 843-2068  
Terry Pugh, NFU Executive-Secretary (306) 652-9465*