

June 5, 1998

Blair Armitage
Clerk
Standing Committee on Agriculture & Forestry
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

VIA FAX 613 947-2104

Dear Mr. Armitage:

Please distribute the attached letter to the members of the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

As well, please forward, via fax to the NFU National Office (306-664-6226), dates and itineraries for that committee's upcoming hearings, especially hearings on the subject of rBGH (BST). If the Senate Committee does hold hearings on rBGH, I would request that the NFU be called to appear.

The National Farmers Union is extremely concerned about the issue of rBGH and its potential health effects on consumers and farm animals and its negative economic effects for Canadian dairy farmers. I thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Darrin Qualman
Executive Secretary
National Farmers Union

—VIA FAX: 3 PAGES TOTAL—

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Members of the Senate Standing Committee
on Agriculture and Forestry
c/o The Clerk of the Committee
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Dear Senators:

The National Farmers Union is extremely concerned about the effects—on farmers' incomes, consumer health, and dairy-herd health—of the synthetic, genetically-engineered veterinary drug recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH, also referred to as "BST"). While such a drug could increase milk production, Canadian dairy farmers already produce enough milk to meet domestic requirements under our supply-management system. Further, consumers, in several polls, have indicated that they would buy less milk, or no milk at all, if rBGH were injected into Canadian milk cows. A product that promises to increase supply and, at the same time, decrease demand, would be disastrous for Canadian dairy farmers.

Further, new evidence that rBGH can be linked to increased incidents of breast and prostate cancer demonstrates the need for much further study on the long-term effects of non-therapeutic exposure to the drug.

The National Farmers Union urges you to take the following actions:

1. Bring forward legislation that would take the approval authority for rBGH away from Health Canada and place that authority with Parliament and the Senate.
2. Hold extensive Senate hearings on the subject of rBGH licensing. Because it is critical to understand the "science" behind the rBGH debate, the NFU urges the Senate to call, as witnesses at its hearings, the four Health Canada scientists who authored a recent report critical of Health Canada's regulatory procedures for rBGH. (This report was cited in the May 29, 1998 Toronto Star article: "Health officials trying to kill critical parts of drug report"). In addition, in order to achieve an open and balanced review, witnesses at the hearings should include:
 - representatives of dairy farmers including the NFU, dairy processors, and retailers;
 - consumer and citizens' groups such as the Toronto Food Policy Council and Council of Canadians;
 - Monsanto;
 - Health Canada;

- U.S. producers with experience with rBGH—both those who are satisfied with its performance and those who are not;
- representatives from Canadian milk marketing agencies.
- and scientists familiar with the current research on IGF-1 and its links to cancer.

Public confidence in Health Canada's ability to approve rBGH has been seriously undermined by continuing accusations of superficial research and improper pressure from drug manufacturers. Recent reports that link rBGH with cancer have heightened consumer concerns with this drug.

As an organization that represents dairy farmers across Canada, the NFU is extremely concerned about an approval process which leaves a lingering cloud of doubt in the minds of consumers regarding the safety of Canadian milk. Thus, it is critical that the House of Commons and Senate of Canada undertake an exhaustive, open, balanced, and objective evaluation of rBGH.

The National Farmers Union thanks you for your attention to this important issue and looks forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Nettie Wiebe
President
National Farmers Union