

McDonald's Contributes To BSE Research

DENVER Colo. — Cattlemen have answered a challenge grant for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) research from the McDonald's Corp. with a \$600,000 investment of their own.

The McDonald's Corp. on Dec. 13 announced that it had awarded a \$500,000 challenge grant to the National Cattlemen's Foundation for BSE research.

The Foundation is an independent charitable research and education organization. It is the primary contractor with the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB) for checkoff-funded research conducted on its behalf by the

National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). The Foundation will work with the NCBA's Research and Technical Services staff on the research.

Cattlemen across the country, through their \$1-per-head check-off, pledged \$600,000 to the BSE research effort. The Beef Promotion Operating Committee, an independent group consisting of ten members from the CBB and ten members from the Federation of State Beef Councils, approved the allocation during its Dec. 12-13 meeting in Las Vegas. The Operating Committee approves all beef checkoff proposals and

expenditures for work conducted on behalf of the CBB.

"Food safety is everyone's business," said Ken Koziol, assistant vice president of McDonald's World-Wide Quality Assurance. "We have the world's safest food supply here in the U.S. and these grants are designed to help keep it that way. Funding the best and the brightest in our industry is not only worthwhile, it is the right thing to do on behalf of the consumer."

"While a recent report from Harvard said the United States was at low risk for a BSE outbreak, cattlemen and allied industries must move to strengthen

the proven firewalls," said Foundation President Don Butler.

"This grant is important for research initiatives that continue to keep America BSE free."

The Foundation now will ask other companies and foundations to participate in research efforts into this disease, about which little is known. However, this much is known: BSE outbreaks in Europe have decimated their beef industry. Beef consumption in Japan, the top export market for U.S. beef, plunged after reports of BSE there.

In October, a committee of 25 representatives of the U.S. beef industry from producers to researchers met to continue identifying voids in BSE research and develop BSE research priorities. The BSE Working Group's five topic areas consisted of basic research, diagnostics, "Beef Quality Assurance" Best Management Practices, eradication and rendering technologies.

"Research and education these are why the Foundation exists," Butler said. "As an independent charitable group, we can pursue funding for vital projects like this that further food safety, and protect consumers and the cattle and beef industries."

"We hope other companies and allied industries contribute so we can better learn how to guard against the introduction of BSE or just wipe it out completely. This effort requires a coordinated research response and we're glad to help take the lead."

N.C. Hog/Pig Inventory Down 3 Percent From Sept. 1

RALEIGH, N.C. — All hogs and pigs on North Carolina farms on December 1, 2001 totaled 9.5 million head, 3 percent below the September 1, 2001, inventory, but 2 percent above the level at this time last year, according to the North Carolina Agricultural Statistics Service (NCASS).

The inventory consisted of 2 percent more market hogs than last December, totaling 8.5 million head. Breeding stock, at 1 million head, was unchanged from the previous year.

North Carolina ranks second nationally in the number of hogs and pigs, behind Iowa's 15 million head. Minnesota is a distant third with 5.6 million head inventory.

The state's pig crop during the September-November 2001 period totaled 4,744,000 head, 1 percent above the same months last year. These pigs were produced by 530,000 sows, no change from last year. Pigs saved per litter averaged 8.95 compared to last year's 8.85 litter rate.

North Carolina producers intend to farrow 530,000 sows from December 2001-February 2002 and 550,000 during March-May 2002. If these intentions materialize, farrowings will be unchanged and up 2 percent, respectively, for the same periods last year.

Consumers Remain Confident That U.S. Beef Is Safe

DENVER, Colo. — Consumer confidence that U.S. beef is safe from 'mad cow disease' (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, BSE) rose to a record high 89 percent in December, while consumer awareness of BSE in the United States has dropped over the last six months, according to recent checkoff-funded research on behalf of the Cattlemen's Beef Board.

A previous survey found that in July 2001 nearly nine of 10 respondents had heard something about 'mad cow disease' in the previous month. In December that figure had dropped to 70 percent — but was still higher than the 58 percent awareness measured in December 2000.

Despite a higher awareness of BSE than a year ago, the number of respondents who said they were confident that U.S. beef is safe rose from 82 percent in December 2000 to the current level of 89 percent.

"The beef industry and the U.S. government have been working since the late 1980s to

ensure the BSE never becomes a problem in this country," said Rick McCarty, NCBA executive director of issues management who oversees the BSE tracking survey program.

"The triple firewalls of import bans, active surveillance and the ban on feeding ruminant-derived protein supplements to ruminants have been effective in preventing BSE problems in the U.S."

A comprehensive, three-year risk analysis study by Harvard University recently confirmed the effectiveness of our prevention and risk management programs."

McCarty also pointed out that the beef industry has maintained an aggressive risk communications program about BSE since 1996. "We've been conducting these attitude tracking surveys since the spring of 1996," he said, "and consumer confidence in the safety of U.S. beef has always remained high."

This high confidence has been supported by the industry's BSE risk communica-

tions efforts. This past year, consumers heard an awful lot in the media about 'mad cow disease,' he added, "but much of what they heard were our messages about the triple firewalls and the fact that we don't have this disease in the U.S."

The independent study was conducted by the research firm IPSOS-Reid U.S. Public Affairs and coordinated for the Cattlemen's Beef Board by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). The study used a national random sample of U.S. adults and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

AMS' Ground Beef Purchases Total More Than \$145 Million

WASHINGTON, D.C. — USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service purchased 4,988,000 pounds of frozen ground beef products Dec. 19 at a cost of approximately \$6,978,000. These products are for use in federal

food and nutrition programs.

Purchases of frozen beef products since the program was announced June 29 total 104,170,000 pounds at a cost of \$145,179,000.

Details of beef purchases Dec. 19 follow: Fine Ground: 4,000,000 lbs.; \$1.3190-1.4815 per lb from 6 of 9 bidders. VPP Patties: 722,000 lbs.; \$1.1744-1.2663 per lb from 4 of 4 bidders; 100% Beef Patties: 152,000 lbs.; \$1.4016-1.4340 per lb from 2 of 4 bidders; Lean Patties: 114,000 lbs.; \$1.7262-1.77585 per lb from 1 of 1 bidder.

Awards made today to be shipped between Feb. 1 and 15 follow:

BEEF, FROZEN FINE GROUND, 40 lb ctn.: American Foods Group, Green Bay, Wis. - 440,000 lbs.; Fort Worth Foods, Fort Worth, Tex. - 360,000 lbs.; Palo Duro Meat Processing, Am-

arillo, Tex. - 480,000 lbs.; Skylark Meats Inc., Omaha, Neb. - 720,000 lbs.; Sterling Pacific Meat Co., Commerce, Calif. - 920,000 lbs.; and Taylor Packing Co., Inc., Wyalusing, Pa. - 1,080,000 lbs.

FROZEN BEEF PATTIES, W/VPP, 40 lb ctn.: American Foodservice Corp., Fort Worth, Tex. - 114,000 lbs.; American Foodservice Corp., King of Prussia, Pa. - 38,000 lbs.; Cherry Meat Packers, Inc., Chicago, Ill. - 418,000 lbs.; and Qualipaq Meats, Inc., Swyersville, Pa. - 152,000 lbs.

FROZEN BEEF PATTIES, 100% BEEF, 40 lb ctn.: Cherry Meat Packers, Inc., Chicago, Ill. - 76,000 lbs.; and Qualipaq Meats, Inc., Swyersville, Pa. - 76,000 lbs.

FROZEN BEEF PATTIES, LEAN, 40 lb ctn.: Cherry Meat Packers, Inc., Chicago, Ill. - 144,000 lbs.



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