

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3403

May 20, 2004

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am deeply disturbed by today's *Washington Post* story on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and beef imports from Canada.

It now appears that the USDA has secretly and selectively violated its own publicly announced ban on the importation of processed beef from Canada. This report, if true, threatens to undermine our efforts to re-open export markets to U.S. beef that were closed because of BSE concerns, continuing the damage to American ranchers from the Department's handling of this issue.

Given the potential impact of these reports on cattle producers in North Dakota and across the nation, I urge you to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to explain to the American people why the Department granted exemptions to the announced ban, and to identify which importing companies received the permits. The public deserves to know who may have benefitted from favored treatment, and why.

In fact, the report is so damaging to the credibility and integrity of the USDA that I believe you should ask the Secretary of Agriculture to resign. I look forward to learning what you are doing to address this situation.

Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD  
United States Senate

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