

INDEPTH: MAD COW

Timeline of BSE in Canada and the U.S.

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Oct. 23, 2006:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is scheduled to respond to R-CALF's appeal of its decision to allow Canadian cattle and beef products into the U.S.

August 23, 2006

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmed a BSE case in an old Alberta cow. No part of the animal entered the food chain, and because it was eight to 10 years old, the animal may have contracted the disease before Canada banned the use of cattle parts in cattle feed, the agency said. It's the fifth case in 2006.

July 10, 2006:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) reports a potential case of BSE in an Alberta dairy cow. The four-year-old cow did not enter the human or animal food system, the agency says.

July 4, 2006:

The CFIA confirms a diagnosis of BSE in a 15-year-old beef cow from Manitoba. Officials say the animal did not enter the food system and there is almost no chance the cow could have passed the disease to its offspring.

June 26, 2006:

The CFIA announces new rules that would ban cattle tissues that could transmit BSE from pet foods, livestock feed and fertilizer. The new rules widen the ban, which previously applied only to cattle and ruminant feed.

April 16, 2006:

The CFIA confirms the presence of mad cow disease in a cow at a farm in the Fraser Valley in British Columbia. Officials say no part of the dairy cow entered the human or animal food systems, and there's no risk of the disease spreading from the dead cow.

March 13, 2006:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture confirms that a cow in Alabama has tested positive for mad cow disease. The department's chief veterinarian, John Clifford, says the cow spent its last year on a farm in Alabama, but officials are still trying to determine where the cow was born and raised.

Jan. 23, 2006:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirms Canada's fourth case of BSE since the first one was recorded in May 2003. The animal was discovered on the Alberta farm where it was born - and no part of it entered the food chain, the agency said.

Jan. 22, 2006:

Preliminary tests on a dead cow in Alberta suggest the animal might have had bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), according to officials with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Dec. 12, 2005:

Japan eases the ban it imposed on Canadian and American beef two years earlier. Cattle younger than 21 months would be allowed into the country as long as high-risk materials such as the spinal cords and heads have been removed. By the end of the month, Canadian beef would once again be in Japanese supermarkets.

Oct. 14, 2005:

A United States court denies an appeal from R-CALF, a Montana-based lobby group, to extend the Canadian beef ban. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association has a final legal obstacle in Montana, where a lower court judge may rehear the case and reinstate the border ban.

July 18, 2005:

A truck carrying live Canadian cattle from Elmwood, Ont., crosses the border at Lewiston, N.Y., the first to do so after a 26-month ban on cattle imports was lifted.

July 14, 2005:

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals overturns a temporary injunction that banned importation of Canadian cattle. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns later announces that the U.S. border is "immediately" open to live Canadian cattle.

June 24, 2005:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announces that tests have confirmed the second case of mad cow disease in the United States.

June 10, 2005:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announces that it is investigating another possible case of BSE, but that the animal did not enter the human food or feed chain. It says the test will take several weeks.

June 6, 2005:

Japan confirms its 20th case of mad cow disease.

April 14, 2005:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture admits there were problems with the samples taken from the two cows in 1997, but insists the two cows did not have BSE.

April 12, 2005:

A CBC News investigation raises questions about two suspected cases of mad cow disease in the U.S. in 1997. The investigation found that brain parts necessary for a proper diagnosis went missing.

» [More on the investigation](#)

March 29, 2005:

The federal government will give farmers \$1 billion to help them through hard times brought on by a high Canadian dollar, low prices, drought and the closed border with the U.S. Payments will begin next month and the sum will be split between grain and oilseed producers, and cattle farmers. Farmers have received about \$2 billion in mad cow relief since last March, but the industry is expected to be in the red again for what will be the third year in a row.

March 2, 2005:

U.S. District Judge Richard Cebull grants a temporary injunction to stop Washington from reopening the border to Canadian cattle, scheduled for March 7. The Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA), filed a lawsuit claiming that reopening the border would cause immediate and irreparable damage.

Feb. 9, 2005:

The United States is set to reopen its border to Canadian cattle on March 7. Agriculture Minister Andy Mitchell and a group of government officials had been lobbying for several days in Washington for the reopening. But trade regulations have been tightened, and fewer cattle are expected to cross the border than before it was closed.

Jan. 13, 2005:

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association announces that it's discussing the possible cull or slaughter of the 1.76 million cattle born before 1997 to help restore faith in Canada's beef industry.

Jan. 12, 2005:

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman announces that the border will reopen March 7 as planned, but she's monitoring the latest BSE investigation very closely and has sent an American team to join the probe.

Jan. 11, 2005 – Fourth case in N.A.:

The CFIA announces that a third case of mad cow disease has been found in Alberta. Agency staff say the animal was born after the 1997 ban on feeding cattle remains to cattle, but became infected by eating leftover feed produced before the ban came into effect.

Jan 3, 2005:

Officials confirm that a second case of BSE has been found in Alberta.

Jan. 7, 2005:

CFIA officials tracking 141 cattle from the same farm that raised Canada's second confirmed case of BSE say cattle infected with the disease may have been eaten by people. The agency says the risk that cattle carried the infection into the human food chain is "very low."

Dec. 30, 2004:

The CFIA says initial tests may have turned up another case of BSE - in a 10 year old dairy cow. The federal agency offers few other details, saying complete test results would be available within a few days.

Dec. 29, 2004:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announces that young live cattle from Canada will be allowed across the border into the United States beginning March 7, 2005.

Dec. 1, 2004:

U.S. President George W. Bush makes his first official visit to Canada and says the process that will open the American border to Canadian beef will take a few months. That night, he dines on Alberta beef at an official dinner.

Sept. 10, 2004:

Federal Agriculture Minister Andy Mitchell announces another \$488 million in aid to the Canadian cattle industry. Ottawa's plans include increasing slaughterhouse capacity, expanding foreign markets for Canadian beef and direct aid to farmers.

Aug. 12, 2004:

A group of cattle producers called Canadian Cattlemen for Fair Trade files a lawsuit against the U.S. government seeking \$150 million under a provision of NAFTA. The group says its members have suffered because of the U.S. decision to close the border to Canadian beef in May 2003.

Aug. 3, 2004:

Alberta's auditor general reports that the province's meat packers nearly tripled their profits because of mad cow disease. Cattle prices dropped, but consumer demand remained high, so packers didn't change their prices. But the packers did not receive money from a provincial program designed to help cattle producers, the auditor says.

June 15, 2004:

The Alberta government reports that more than 10 per cent of the province's \$400 million in mad cow aid went to two meat-packing companies: Lakeside Farm Industries and Cargill Foods. The province's agriculture minister says they got the biggest cheques because they have the most invested in the industry.

May 13, 2004:

MPs from the Conservative party and Bloc Québécois block a House of Commons motion to impose fines on meat packers Lakeside and Cargill for refusing to release financial information. The all-party agriculture committee asked for fines of \$250,000 until the companies open their books to federal auditors.

May 6, 2004:

The House of Commons finds Lakeside and Cargill in contempt of Parliament for refusing to give financial statements to the federal agriculture committee.

July 9, 2004:

Ottawa announces it will bring in new regulations to prevent animal parts linked to BSE from being fed to pets and to livestock such as chicken and pigs. The new rules would complement

existing rules against using animal parts in feed for ruminants, such as cows and sheep.

April 18, 2004:

The U.S. lifts import restrictions on ground beef, bone-in cuts of beef and offal from animals younger than 30 months. The import of live cows and meat from older animals from Canada is still banned.

March 30, 2004:

The financial records of five of Canada's largest meat packers are subpoenaed to determine whether the companies profited unfairly from the mad cow crisis. The investigation is instigated by complaints that farmers have been getting low prices since BSE was found, but consumers are not paying less for their beef in stores.

Jan. 6, 2004:

Officials from the U.S. and Canada announce that DNA tests confirm a cow that tested positive for mad cow disease in Washington state was born in Alberta. The cow's DNA matched samples from the bull that sired her and from a calf she gave birth to while in Canada.

Dec. 27, 2003:

American officials announce that an ear tag on an American cow diagnosed with BSE suggests that it was imported from Canada as part of a herd of 74 dairy cows from Alberta. Officials with the CFIA say DNA tests will confirm whether the cow did indeed come from Canada.

Dec. 25, 2003:

Scientists in the U.K. confirm on Christmas Day that a cow in Washington state did have mad cow disease. Canada decides not to expand its U.S. beef import restrictions.

Dec. 24, 2003:

Mexico, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and South Korea are among the countries to ban the import of American beef. (The European Union already bans U.S. beef because of concerns about the use of growth hormones.) Canada restricts imports of cattle-related products from the U.S. to dairy products, cattle destined for immediate slaughter and boneless beef cuts from cattle under 30 months of age.

Dec. 23, 2003:

The U.S. announces its first apparent case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), in a Holstein cow in Washington state. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman confirmed the discovery, saying the animal was a "downer," one that is too sick to walk. Veneman said the USDA is taking "all appropriate actions" to deal with the situation, but told a hastily called news conference that "the risk to human health from BSE is extremely low."

- TEXT: [U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's announcement](#)

Nov. 4, 2003:

Japan confirms that a bull it killed in October had mad cow disease. The 21-month-old Holstein

tested positive on Oct. 29. The bull had been housed in a slaughterhouse in Hiroshima state in western Japan. It's the ninth mad cow case for Japan since the illness was discovered in the country in 2001 and its second in less than a month. Japan banned Canadian beef earlier in 2003 after a single case of mad cow disease was discovered in Alberta.

Nov. 4, 2003:

B.C. Agriculture Minister John van Dongen announces as much as \$7.3 million in assistance for ranchers still suffering from the mad cow crisis. Ranchers are suffering from low prices for their cattle and a shortage of feed brought on by the summer drought, according to van Dongen.



Oct. 20, 2003:

CBC News reports that Canadian cattle could be moving across the border into the United States by early December. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget, which manages White House regulatory policies, is expected to end the ban on imports of live Canadian cattle under 30 months old. The ruling would apply to cattle from all regions across Canada.

Sept. 11, 2003:

Almost four months after a single case of BSE was found in Alberta, beef shipments from that province begin crossing into the United States. So far though, shipments of live cattle are still not allowed – only selected cuts from cattle under 30 months old.

Sept. 4, 2003:

Canadian beef producers ask the federal agriculture minister to approve a mass slaughter of 620,000 cattle. Terry Hildebrandt, the president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, says the size of the Canadian herd needs to be reduced by 12 per cent immediately to prevent further damage to the sagging beef industry.

Sept. 1, 2003:

More than 450,000 kilograms of beef are served for free at hundreds of barbecues across Canada in an effort to pull the country's beef industry out of a slump caused by a single case of BSE.

Aug. 28, 2003:

The Alberta government announces that Canadian beef could be moving across the U.S. border within days. Terry Willock of Alberta Agriculture said officials have been told the United States began to issue import permits. Those permits will allow the first shipments of Canadian beef into the United States since a single case of mad cow disease slammed the border shut three months earlier.

Aug. 11, 2003:

Mexico announces it partially lifted its ban on Canadian beef imports. The move comes just three days after the U.S. made a similar decision. Like the U.S., Mexico will still ban the importation of live Canadian cattle, but the ban will be lifted for boneless meat cuts from cattle under 30 months of age, as well as lambs and goats under 12 months of age.

Aug. 9, 2003:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announces it is easing its total ban on Canadian beef, which was imposed May 20. The announcement was a shot in the arm for Canada's beef industry. The beef trade between Canada and the United States was almost \$2 billion in 2002. That market was completely lost since the border closed in May. The cost has been estimated at \$11 million per day, and 5,000 jobs in Canada.

Aug. 8, 2003:

Tory Leader Peter MacKay announces that former prime minister Brian Mulroney is willing to lead a delegation to Washington to convince the Americans to re-open the border to Canadian beef. The Conservative plan is sent in a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

July 30, 2003:

In a meeting with Canadian Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief, Japan's agriculture minister, Yoshiyuki Kamei, says he won't budge on his country's ban of Canadian beef. Vanclief said he tried to convince Kamei that science was on Canada's side. Vanclief outlined all the steps Canada has taken to ensure the safety of Canadian beef. "In just about every case we've been ahead of what's been happening and what has happened in the last few years in Japan."

July 26, 2003:

2,000 ranchers gather near a border crossing between Alberta and Montana to eat free hamburgers and discuss how to lift a ban on Canadian beef exports. The producers from both countries held a barbecue and urged politicians to remove the trade restriction imposed after a single case of mad cow disease was reported in Canada in May 2003.

July 25, 2003:

The government of Alberta announces it will put another \$79 million into programs to help farmers hard hit by the mad cow crisis. Provincial Agriculture Minister Shirley McClellan says the money will be used to pay producers who keep cattle from slaughter, in the hope that will boost prices. The Stranded Beef program pays for the storage of Canadian beef that is sitting in bonded warehouses in foreign markets, held up by the ban.

July 19, 2003:

Ottawa announces that, to reduce the risk of mad cow disease, Canada's beef industry must remove certain parts of cattle carcasses. Beginning July 24, slaughterhouses must get rid of "specified risk materials" (SRMs), such as brains and spinal cords, from the bodies of cattle older than 30 months. The new safeguards were outlined by federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief and federal Health Minister Minister Anne McLellan.

July 15, 2003:

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein says Canada may have to consider trade sanctions against Japan and the United States unless they allow imports of Canadian beef. Klein said the bans, originally imposed because one Alberta cow was found to have mad cow disease (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) on May 20, have no scientific basis and are more about politics than food safety. Klein wasn't calling for immediate action, but he suggested sanctions may be the only way to end the dispute. "Something is going to have to be done."

July 14, 2003:

A Canadian beef industry official expresses sympathy Monday for Japanese officials who refuse to let Canadian beef into their country. Japan went through its own mad cow crisis two years ago, Ted Haney, president of the Canadian Beef Export Association, told CBC Newsworld. "The minister of agriculture lost his job. The entire government was called into question," he said. "That crisis still haunts many regulators in Japan." As a result, they need their comfort zone raised, Haney said.

July 12, 2003:

Federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief fails to persuade Japan to start importing Canadian beef again even though officials insist the animals are free of mad cow disease. "I'm frustrated that scientific data isn't getting through to the world," Vanclief told reporters after an 80-minute meeting with his Japanese counterpart, Yoshiyuki Kamei, in Ottawa. Japan is not prepared to lift its ban on Canadian beef, although Vanclief said he's not sure why.

July 10, 2003:

Federal and provincial agriculture ministers wraps up a two-day meeting promising to work harder on convincing the world that Canadian beef is safe from mad cow disease. They agree to move quickly on recent recommendations about the way animals are slaughtered. Parts of cows that might be infected with BSE, such as brains and spinal cords, will be removed from all carcasses that are being processed into human or animal feed. Details are not released on the exact new rules or a timetable for implementing them.

July 9, 2003:

Mexico's ambassador to Canada says his country may soon reopen its borders to Canadian beef. Maria Teresa Garcia de Madero doesn't give a firm date, but says her country would be the first to once again import Canadian beef. Mexico is Canada's second-largest beef market, buying \$197 million in beef last year. Almost 99 per cent of the beef was from Alberta. The border has been closed since May when Canadian officials announced a single cow in Alberta had been diagnosed with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

July 8, 2003:

Provincial and territorial governments announce they are considering limits on American beef if the U.S. doesn't reopen its border to the Canadian product. The U.S. banned Canadian beef after a single case of mad cow disease was reported in Alberta in May. Since then, Canada's 90,000-plus beef producers have lost an estimated \$11 million per day.

June 26, 2003:

Health Minister Anne McLellan and Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief promise a quick response to recommendations from an international team of experts looking into Canada's handling of a mad cow case. The four-person investigative team examined how the CFIA handled the case of the cow from Alberta that was diagnosed with BSE.

The team's recommendations included:

- Removing certain animal tissues from products destined for human consumption,

- Reviewing animal feed restrictions,
- Strengthening tracking and tracing systems,
- Improving disease testing and surveillance,
- Improving disease awareness among producers, veterinarians and the public.

June 9, 2003:

Western premiers say Ottawa should provide \$360 million in compensation to help the cattle industry recover from lost revenue from the mad cow scare. The proposed Canada Temporary Slaughter Cattle Disaster Assistance program would run until Aug. 31 or until the U.S. opens the border to Canadian cattle exports.

June 8, 2003:

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein accuses the federal government of a double standard because Ottawa relaxed employment insurance rules for workers affected by SARS in Ontario but not for Western beef industry workers. "We think the federal government should treat B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and wherever beef is produced the same as Ontario," he said.

June 7, 2003:

A team of international scientists arrives in Regina to examine Canada's response to the mad cow outbreak. The scientists - from Europe, New Zealand and the United States - were invited by Canadian officials, who hope the international review, plus negative tests on 1,400 cattle, should help make the case that Canadian beef is safe. No second case of BSE has turned up yet.

May 30, 2003:

Tests on three more cattle herds linked to Canada's only case of mad cow disease show all of the animals were free of the disease. Three hundred and seventy animals, including the infected cow's last herd, have been slaughtered and tested. All of the tests have come back negative.

May 29, 2003:

Federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief says it's unhelpful for any province to talk about banning Alberta cattle because of fears about mad cow disease. He made the comment in response to reports that Ontario Agriculture Minister Helen Johns is looking at ways the province could prevent Prairie cattle from entering her province. Meanwhile, cattle farmers are struggling to find ways of disposing of dead cattle that normally would end up in rendering plants in Canada and the United States. Since the incidence of mad cow disease, demand for the cattle has dropped 50 per cent.

May 28, 2003:

Agriculture officials announce they plan to kill up to 700 more cattle as they try to determine how a single Alberta cow wound up with mad cow disease, and whether more cattle are infected. More than 1,000 animals will have been slaughtered in the wake of the mad cow infection discovered earlier in May in a cow that was sent to slaughter in January.

May 27, 2003:

Manitoba conservation officials say they are deciding how to dispose of hundreds of tonnes of cattle parts. This comes two days after the province's largest rendering plant, Rothsay,

announced it would no longer process the parts because it can't sell them south of the border. The United States stopped importing beef from Canada because of the mad cow disease scare.

May 26, 2003:

Abattoirs have so far slaughtered nearly 400 cows during the investigation of a single case of mad cow disease in Alberta, according to federal officials. Two entire herds - including the 192-head northern Alberta herd where the infected cow last lived, and another in Saskatchewan where it might have stayed for up to four years - have been killed and the animals' brains tested for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

May 25, 2003:

Officials say there's no evidence that more than one animal on a ranch in Alberta had mad cow disease. Preliminary tests on the herd of 150 cattle come back negative for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

May 24, 2003:

Investigators from the CFIA add three British Columbia farms to the quarantine list, but stress that so far there's only one known case of the disease. Sixteen farms are now under quarantine including 11 in Alberta, two in Saskatchewan and three in B.C.

May 23, 2003:

At least seven ranches in Alberta and two ranches in Saskatchewan are quarantined because of concerns over mad cow disease. Food inspectors say the quarantines are merely a precaution and that there is no evidence that more than one cow in Canada has been diagnosed with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

May 20, 2003:

The World Reference Laboratory confirms the cow had BSE. Within hours, the US announces a ban on all imports of Canadian beef. In Canada, federal and provincial agriculture ministers take to the airwaves to reassure the public that the diseased cow didn't go into the food system and that the animal's home ranch is quarantined.

May 17-19, 2003:

A federal lab tests the cow on May 17 and 18. As with previous findings, this test does not rule out BSE. Specimens are sent to the World Reference Laboratory in Britain on May 19.

May 16, 2003:

The cow killed in Alberta in January is tested for pneumonia and BSE, even though it didn't show symptoms of BSE. The provincial lab notified the CFIA later that day.

Jan. 31, 2003:

A cow was killed in northern Alberta. It was deemed unfit for consumption because it was underweight and suspected of having pneumonia. The head was kept for testing.

Aug. 23, 2002:

Marwyn Peaster, who farms near Wanham, Alta., buys the cow along with others at a cattle auction.

Summer or Fall 1998:

Cow sold to Saskatchewan farm, where it lives for four years and gives birth to four calves.

1997:

The CFIA bans the use of brains, spinal cords and other parts, known as specified risk material, or SRM, in cattle feed. The policy also applies to the remains of animals such as sheep, goats, bison, elk and deer. However, cattle can still be fed the remains of chickens, hogs and other animals, and cow blood is still used in cattle feed.

Spring 1997:

A female Black Angus cow is born and later sold to an Alberta farmer.

1993:

A single cow in Red Deer, Alta., is found with BSE. The cow had been imported from Britain in 1987. The herd of origin is destroyed along with other cattle determined to be at risk.

1992:

The CFIA implements a national BSE surveillance program. All animals with clinical signs of the disease are tested, as are some animals with no clinical signs. In May 2003, federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief said the number of samples tested in Canada was double the international standard set by the OIE, the international organization that collects and analyses information on animal disease control.