McNEILL CATTLE COMPANY

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Country of Origin Labeling Program
Agricultural Marketing Service
USDA
Stop 0249
Room 2092-S
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250-0249

Dear Sirs:

I am in favor of COOL. It seems to be a good marketing tool, and all of the consumer surveys that I have seen are overwhelmingly in favor of it. This will promote U.S. beef in a big way – by the same token it may leave some beef, unlabeled on the grocer's shelf, unsold because it is clear the consumers want U.S. beef as opposed to foreign beef. I buy tools and other things that state where they are made, and it is clear that U.S. made tools are superior. We, in the U.S., have the best food and health services that we have been able to devise – of course, it can get better, but it is far superior than anything around the reset of the world.

I think some simple rules can be made that will allow this marketing tool to be used without penalty to other people. I note that Senator Jim Tallent, R-Missouri, this week told a gathering of livestock producers in Joplin, that he intends to seek simple rules to comply with COOL requirements.

Finally, it is very important that we know the orientation and processing of our beef. Security of Homeland Security Tom Ridge states he favors a national I.D. system for livestock – the Bush Administration Homeland Security Chief endorsed an ambitious concept for nationwide identification of all commercial livestock (Sacramento Bee, April 29, 2003).

As I read the news from around the country, the media has stirred up another hype – the costs of compliance with COOL has gone from an estimate 2 billion to 20 billion. Theses are just plain crazy figures, and designed to be scare talk more than rational thinking.

Good producers keep good records anyway, and almost all producers keep some records. We all know that we may be called upon to prove the birth facts on questions of anthrax, t.b., or other "ordinary" diseases that livestock have been susceptible to over the years.

Very truly yours,

Alan McNeill

AM/as