

BFO STATEMENT

BSE Risk Status Change



Beef Farmers Relieved to Hear Canada's BSE Status Has Now Moved to Negligible Risk

May 27, 2021 (Guelph, Ont.) – The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) together with its 19,000 members are breathing a major sigh of relief in response to the significant change of Canada's bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk status from controlled to negligible-risk status. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) made the announcement today during the virtual 88th Annual General Session of the World Assembly of National Delegates to the OIE.

This change in status will help facilitate expanded access to international markets for Canadian beef, which have been limited by BSE-era restrictions since 2003. Attaining negligible risk now puts Canada at the lowest level of risk for BSE alongside the U.S., which attained negligible status in 2013.

"Today's announcement is an important milestone for the beef sector in Ontario and across Canada," says Rob Lipsett, BFO President. "Confirmation of our negligible-risk status will allow us to finally begin work to resolve remaining BSE-era market access restrictions that have had a negative impact on our sector's competitiveness."

BFO appreciates the efforts of the Government of Canada, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Marie-Claude Bibeau and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association for their steadfast commitment to resolving this market access hurdle on behalf of the Canadian beef sector.

WHY IT MATTERS

Since 2007, Canada has been recognized by the OIE as a controlled BSE-risk country. In 2020, Canada applied to the OIE to achieve negligible BSE-risk status, which would enable Canada to seek new market access opportunities for Canada's cattle and beef exports. To achieve this (among other requirements), Canada needed to demonstrate that infected domestic animals were born more than 11 years prior. The last case of BSE in Canada was in 2015 in a cow born in 2009.

When BSE was discovered in 2003, the impact to the Canadian beef industry was enormous. About 40 markets immediately closed their borders to Canadian cattle and beef. The industry moved quickly to take steps to minimize the damage and to eliminate BSE from its national herd. Since then, a significant number of Canada's export markets have reopened to some Canadian beef and cattle.

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The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) represent 19,000 beef farmers in Ontario by advocating in the areas of sustainability, animal health and care, environment, food safety, and domestic and export market development. BFO's vision is to help foster a sustainable and profitable beef industry, and have Ontario beef recognized as an outstanding product by our consumers.



For more information

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