

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 5, 2021

Robert Fairweather
Acting Director
United States Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Acting Director Fairweather,

We write to urge you to withdraw the final rule on the Importation of Sheep, Goats, and Certain Other Ruminants (APHIS-2009-0095) until its impact on current market conditions has been fully evaluated. The rule seeks to remove bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) related import restrictions on sheep, goats, and most of their products. The existing BSE-related import restrictions function as a necessary protection against the introduction of other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), such as scrapie.

TSEs are a group of rare degenerative brain disorders. Scrapie and BSE are both TSEs. BSE, commonly known as “mad cow disease,” is a progressive neurologic disease of cows. Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease which affects the central nervous system of sheep and goats. There is no cure or treatment for either disease.

The federal government has invested over \$200 million into scrapie eradication since the early 2000s. This investment has yielded tremendous results, lowering the percentage of scrapie-positive cull sheep at slaughter by 99 percent since FY2003. By allowing scrapie positive animals and genetic materials into the United States, we risk reintroducing the very disease we have nearly eradicated.

If disease is reintroduced into domestic flocks, opportunities for export will rapidly decline. Prior to a domestic BSE occurrence in cattle in 2003, Japan was the primary export market for U.S. lamb. Japan quickly closed American access to its market and the U.S. did not recoup it until 2018.

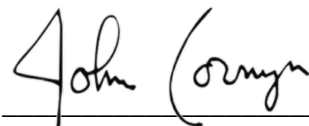
The rule should not precede accomplishing increased market access for American lamb, goats, and their products. By removing BSE-related restrictions, the United States would be increasing foreign imports while trade obstructions from countries such as the United Kingdom, European Union, and China remain in place.

For these reasons, we urge you to withdraw the final rule on the Importation of Sheep, Goats, and Certain Other Ruminants. Thank you for your time and consideration of our request.

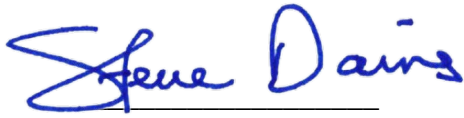


Kevin Cramer
United States Senator


Sincerely,



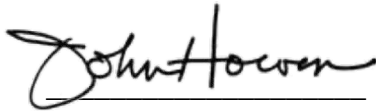
John Cornyn
United States Senator



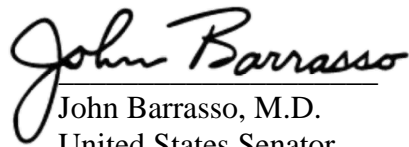
Steve Daines
United States Senator



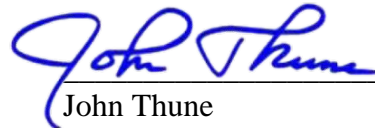
Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator



John Thune
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

Cc: Acting Secretary Kevin Shae, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Acting U.S. Trade Representative Maria Pagan, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative