



## FOOD ANIMAL CONCERNS TRUST

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### **FDA Drags Feet on Rule Designed to Contain Mad Cow Disease**

FACT opposes the delay and calls for stronger regulation

Chicago, IL – Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) condemns the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for bowing to industry pressure and delaying the implementation of a rule that would protect the public from mad cow disease. This new delay comes after years of inaction under the Bush administration, despite the detection of mad cow disease in the United States in 2003.

The FDA announced today that it would delay implementation of a rule designed to stop the spread of mad cow disease. The rule was originally scheduled to go into effect on April 27, 2009 and prohibits certain risky materials such as the brains and spinal cords from older cattle for use in animal feed. Although the rule was finalized in April 2008, animal feed manufacturers successfully convinced the FDA that they need more time to prepare as they cannot safely dispose of these prohibited materials at this time.

Responding to the delay, Richard Wood, FACT's Executive Director, stated, "The rule was already a gift to the industry in that it failed to ban all sources of mad cow disease. The FDA is acting irresponsibly by delaying implementation of these minimum requirements. The Agency should implement the rule as originally scheduled and continue to work on strengthening it."

The rule requires the removal of some materials from animal feeds, but the FDA deemed that it was too costly to require the removal of *all* tissues capable of spreading mad cow disease. This cost-cutting measure intentionally allows 10 percent of infectious material to remain in feed. The FDA also left open a loophole that allows cattle to be fed poultry manure and bedding, material which can contain rendered cattle parts. It is possible for cattle to consume material infected with mad cow disease via ingestion of poultry waste. The FDA estimates that several millions of tons of chicken manure are eaten by millions of cattle each year in the United States. Once cattle are infected, humans who eat their meat can contract an untreatable and fatal neurological disorder, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD).

"Instead of delaying the rule, the FDA should implement it, improve it, and prohibit poultry litter feeding to cattle. In light of all the recent food safety scares, we have a responsibility to be proactive against the threat of mad cow disease," Wood added.

Based in Chicago, FACT believes that healthy animals are essential for maintaining a safe food supply. FACT was at the table from the very beginning when mad cow disease was linked to vCJD in people in 1996. Over the last thirteen years, FACT has been present at stakeholder meetings, agency briefings, and other events related to the U.S. response to mad cow disease. Since 2003, when the first U.S. cow was diagnosed with mad cow disease, FACT has called on the FDA to amend the original rule and take needed steps to prevent the spread of the disease. For more information please contact Richard Wood at (773) 525-4952 or visit [www.foodanimalconcerns.org](http://www.foodanimalconcerns.org).

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