



September 8, 2020

Mr. Kevin Shea, Administrator
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Mr. Paul Kiecker, Administrator
Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Mr. Shea and Mr. Kiecker –

On behalf of the United States Cattlemen's Association's (USCA) nationwide membership of cow-calf producers, backgrounders, feedlot operators, livestock haulers, and independent processors, we write to you today with deep concern regarding reports of contaminated meat sickening Mexican citizens.

According to *Food Safety News*¹, a total of 54 people from six municipalities have fallen ill after consuming meat contaminated with Clenbuterol, a beta2-agonist used as a food additive in some livestock feed to promote muscle mass and meat yield in cattle, lamb, poultry and swine. This practice is illegal in the United States and Europe. USCA strongly recommends increased inspection protocols of all beef and cattle imported from Mexico until such a time when confidence can be restored in Mexican beef product.

A 2019 analysis² by Aaron Valencia Garcia of the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos tested 106 samples of beef muscle and beef liver from various vendors in the metro area of Cuernavaca, Morelos and found that 52 samples tested positive for Clenbuterol residue. The residue quantities exceeded the maximum limits by the Codex Alimentarius of 0.2 micrograms per kilogram for beef muscle and 0.6 micrograms per kilogram for beef liver.

¹ Food Safety News. "Suspected Clenbuterol poisonings in Mexico under investigation". August 25, 2020. https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2020/08/suspected-clenbuterol-poisonings-in-mexico-under-investigation/?fbclid=IwAR1xCHrSj6it_Hn5S9N5ZwwMZgOcP6yAWXrIDMABjvOPuo3hQ8grK53WQGU

² Aaron Valencia Garcia. "Evaluación de la presencia de residuos de clenbuterol en muestras de productos cárnicos dentro del estado de morelos". December 1, 2019. <http://148.218.65.90/xmlui/handle/20.500.12055/1208>



Further, in 2016, the National Football League (NFL) was forced to issue a warning to its players about consuming too much meat while visiting Mexico or China³:

“There is evidence that meat produced in China and Mexico may be contaminated with Clenbuterol, an anabolic agent which is banned by the NFL Policy on Performance-Enhancing Substances. Consuming large quantities of meat while visiting those particular countries may result in a positive test for Clenbuterol in violation of the Policy.”

As illustrated above, Mexico unfortunately has an ongoing issue with ensuring the safety of its domestic meat product. Even more unfortunate is that most of that meat product is destined for U.S. consumers.

In 2019, Mexico sent 86% of its total beef exports - worth \$1.3 billion – to the United States, making them the third-biggest foreign beef supplier to the United States. Juan Ley, president of Mexico’s main cattle growers association, boasted in a May 13 *Reuters* report that those numbers are only going to increase in 2020, stating “I think we’re going to leap past Canada this year.”⁴

With the loophole created when mandatory country-of-origin labeling for U.S. beef products was repealed, meatpackers are now able to import foreign beef from places like Mexico and Brazil, have that product undergo a “significant transformation” within our borders, and then claim the “Product of the U.S.A.” label. This means that it is more than possible that meat contaminated with Clenbuterol can wind up in product packaged with a “U.S.A.” label and end up sickening U.S. citizens.

Allowing contaminated meat into our borders is unacceptable for a nation that prides itself on producing the highest quality, most sustainable, and safest beef in the world. We ask that APHIS and FSIS seriously evaluate the public health risks associated with importing beef and meat from Mexico, including conducting an equivalence verification to ensure that Mexico is still maintaining a regulatory food safety inspection system that is on par with the United States’.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brooke Miller MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Brooke Miller, M.D.
President, U.S. Cattlemen’s Association

³ ESPN. “Players warned too much meat abroad may lead to positive test”. May 3, 2016. https://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/15454487/nfl-warns-eating-too-much-meat-mexico-china-result-positive-test

⁴ David Alire Garcia, P.J. Huffstutter. “More Mexican beef headed to U.S. dinner tables as American supply crunch bites” May 13, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-usa-trade-beef/more-mexican-beef-headed-to-u-s-dinner-tables-as-american-supply-crunch-bites-idUSKBN22P2OK>