

Opinion



Guest Viewpoint

Remember that beef remains a safe choice

While all of us connected with agriculture hoped and prayed it wouldn't happen, in our hearts we knew that the possibility existed it could. Well that fateful day occurred just in time for the holidays, but thankfully the detection of BSE has been an isolated case. In case you were too busy last-minute shopping, traveling home for the holidays or just tuned out of the media barrage, on Dec. 23 one Holstein cow from Washington state was detected with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).

Here's what we know for certain to date. U.S. Department of Agriculture officials have told us this cow was more than six years old, which means it was born before primary protection against this disease was implemented by the United States and Canada. This recent BSE case was found in a federally inspected plant. The central nervous tissue from this animal, which scientists recognize as the infective material, did not go into the food supply.

According to the Food Safety Inspection Service, the beef from the animal poses virtually no human health risk. USDA is recalling the meat and rendered by-products in an effort to err on the side of caution. Tracing the origin of the infected cow to Canada means the U.S. beef herd remains free from BSE. The USDA is also tracking other animals that entered the country with the infected cow as a precautionary measure. The likelihood that any other animals are infected with BSE is minimal, according to ag officials.

Here's what this scenario means for the consumers who have long enjoyed the safest, most extensive security system anywhere in the world. The following facts come from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

The BSE agent is not found in meat like steaks, roasts or ground beef. It is found in the central nervous system tissue such as brain and spinal cord. A USDA inspector or veterinarian inspects all U.S. cattle before they are processed. Animals with any signs of neurological disorder are removed from the food supply and tested for BSE. BSE affects older cattle, typically more than 30 months of age. The vast majority of the cattle going to market in the United States are less than 24 months old.

Federal inspectors ensure that central nervous system tissues or specified risk materials do not enter the food chain. The only way BSE spreads is through contaminated feed. The Food and Drug Administration instituted a ban on feeding ruminant-derived meat and bone meal supplements to cattle in 1997. This prevents the spread of BSE to other animals if it were present in this country.

Agricultural and government officials continue to investigate the events in Washington state. No doubt there will be additional changes in the way our beef industry conducts business in the future — all aimed at ensuring U.S. consumers can enjoy beef with confidence. No doubt there may be acceleration in a national cattle identity program. Look for a renewed effort to ban the processing of "downer" cows.

Stay tuned — there will be continuing developments in the BSE scenario. Remember that although the isolated detection of BSE may be troubling to U.S. consumers, be assured the overall safety of our food supply is not in question.

Kansas producers, as well as their U.S. counterparts, are dedicated to continue working with scientific and regulatory authorities to ensure all the latest technologies are applied to further improve our comprehensive food safeguards.

Beef remains a safe choice for consumption. Americans, continue eating your favorite cut of beef. I know I will. — *by John Schlageck, managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.*

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansas.com.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$32, 8 months \$47, 12 months \$64. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$44, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$72. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$51, 8 months \$61, 12 months \$75. All other states, \$75, 12 months.

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The coach speaks out



Tom Dreiling

● My Turn

was committed by any player in our program. An indiscretion, yes; a violation of the law, no. At that time, it became apparent that the decision to suspend players did not seem consistent with other decisions made within the program.

"Timing, then, became an issue. I had one day in which to make what I could only pray and hope would be the appropriate decision. This proved to be the most agonizing and painful event in my entire professional career.

"As I anguished over this decision, I was well aware that I do not have the capacity to regulate the decisions that 22-year-olds make regarding their moral and sexual behaviors which are within the limits of the law.

"The question arose: Would it be better not to start the young men? The idea of allowing them to play, but not start the game and sit out for a series or two seemed merely a token consequence. I believed the price of this irresponsibility should be far greater. All the while, I was well aware that any decisions I made would be met with criticism.

"I cannot adequately convey to you how badly I feel for those within the Wildcat family who, through their allegiance to our university and athletic program, are suffering immensely. A day has not gone by that I have not prayed that the Lord would ease the pain for our players, coaches, staff, the athletic department, the university faculty, student body and administration, and the remarkable K-State fan base throughout the country. The accusation that was falsely made in this incident will live within each of us for a long time to come.

"I am grateful for the outpouring of support

and the continued faith that we are diligently attempting to advance the proper values to young people within our program and that we are teaching life's lessons in a manner which provides them with a venue to mature and grow toward a successful future.

"I apologize from the depth of my soul that this situation ever took place."

I HAVE been a K-State fan dating back to the early 1960s, and I have lived and died with their athletic programs. Basketball, over the years, was the thread that held me close to K-State, thanks to a relative, Larry Weigel, who was among Wildcat basketball greats years back. Then came the Bill Snyder era and an unbelievable turnaround in the football program at the university. In his 15 years at the helm of the Wildcat football fortunes, he's won more football games than K-State had won over all their years of existence. The reward of his work and dedication and love and care of those he supervised — and for those who offered support from the seats in the stadium — was to earn a Bowl Championship Series berth, which took place this year in the Fiesta Bowl. K-State finally earned the recognition they so rightfully deserved. We know how it ended — in defeat, in embarrassment. It is easy for armchair quarterbacks to proclaim what they would have done if in Snyder's shoes as it regards the Roberson incident. I was among those disappointed. But I held my tongue to see in what direction this unfortunate circumstance would go. I am glad I sat back to watch. To wait. To listen. And now that the smoke has cleared I can better understand why the coach did what he did. And I fully support the severity of the punishment he dished out. The Wildcats will again be back as a contender. The program will be enriched because of what happened to conclude this season.

HAVE a good evening...and a good weekend!

Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays.

Did your reality check bounce?

Since we are again "At Week's End," here are a few things to ponder, as shared by a couple of readers.

- ✓I love deadlines. I especially like the whooshing sound they make as they go flying by.
- ✓Tell me what you need, and I'll tell you how to get along without it.
- ✓Needing someone is like needing a parachute. If they aren't there the first time, chances are you won't be needing them again.
- ✓I don't have an attitude problem; you have a perception problem.
- ✓Last night I lay in bed looking up at the stars in the sky and I thought to myself: where the heck is the ceiling?
- ✓My reality check bounced.
- ✓On the keyboard of life, always keep one finger on the escape key.
- ✓I don't suffer from stress. I am a carrier!
- ✓You are slower than a herd of turtles stampeding through peanut butter.
- ✓Everyone is someone else's weirdo.

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● At Week's End

- ✓Don't be irreplaceable — if you can't be replaced, you won't be promoted.
- ✓You can go anywhere you want if you look serious and carry a clipboard.
- ✓So this **isn't** Home Sweet Home — adjust!
- ✓Ring bell for maid service. If no answer, do it yourself!
- ✓I came, I saw, I decided to order take-out.
- ✓Blessed are they who can laugh at themselves, for they shall never cease to be amused.
- ✓I'd live life in the fast lane, but I am married to a speed bump.
- ✓What should you give a man who has every-

thing? A woman to show him how to work it!

Now, I'll add some of my own:

- ✓Politics makes strange bedfellows, they say, so maybe that's why a lot of what happens on Capitol Hill makes no sense.
- ✓If money is the root of all evil, what are winners of powerball jackpots?
- ✓The "luck of the draw" simply means someone survived.
- ✓A "stitch in time" has no rationale.
- ✓What you see in a mirror is the ultimate truth.
- ✓"Three Coins in the Fountain" means somebody didn't read the posted rules.
- ✓Jumping to conclusions can be a never ending exercise.
- ✓The way they explain it, second hand smoke and a second hand rope have the same effect.
- ✓That eerie sound you hear in your car is coming from an unused seat belt.

Got something for "At Week's End?" If so, e-mail td@nwkansas.com, fax (785) 462-7749 or regular mail to 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701.

About those letters . . .

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