# TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

March 25, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As we continue to promote efficient trade between the United States and Mexico, a serious concern has come to my attention. Live cattle exports from the United States to Mexico are facing serious delays due to the requirements for campylobacteriosis and trichomoniasis testing. The mandatory requirement of all bulls to be tested, regardless of age, is a key disturbance to the transaction of live cattle into Mexico.

Under current protocol, virgin females and pregnant females inseminated by artificial insemination are not required to be tested for campylobacteriosis and trichomoniasis. I urge USDA reevaluate the testing requirements and work with your Mexican counterparts to quickly align the requirements for young bulls with those for young, virgin females. With this reevaluation I ask that only bulls over the age of eight months be required to receive the campylobacteriosis and trichomoniasis tests.

Thank you for considering this recommendation and for your assistance in a quick resolution that will facilitate smooth transactions for our livestock producers. Given the current circumstances regarding trade with Mexico, we should seize any opportunity to ease the burden on the agriculture industry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Todd

Todd Staples

TS/AL/se

Cc: Dr. Bob Hillman

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USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

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The Honorable Todd Staples
Commissioner
Texas Department of Agriculture
Post Office Box 12847
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Commissioner Staples:

Thank you for your letter of March 25, 2009, regarding the current campylobacteriosis and trichomoniasis testing requirements for breeding cattle exported from the United States to Mexico.

I understand your concern and assure you that normalizing cattle trade between the United States and Mexico is a high priority for the Department of Agriculture (USDA). We at USDA share your interest in eliminating the campylobacteriosis and trichomoniasis test requirements from the protocol. Like you, we believe that the tests are of limited value and add additional and unnecessary costs to producers. However, as you know, the tests are contained in the Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación's (SAGARPA) Federal requirements.

Officials with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) continue to work diligently on this issue with their Mexican counterparts. Previously, APHIS officials negotiated the test requirements to ensure that unbred females and females pregnant by artificial insemination not be required to have the tests because this was, at the time, the best available option to secure market access for U.S.-origin breeding cattle. We assure you that we will continue to discuss this and other issues with SAGARPA officials as we negotiate market access for all U.S.-origin cattle.

Should you have any additional questions or concerns about this issue, you or your staff members may wish to contact Ms. Hallie Zimmers, a State liaison with APHIS. You can reach Ms. Zimmers by phone at (202) 720-0378 or by e-mail at Hallie.Zimmers@ aphis.usda.gov.

I appreciate your input and look forward to continued partnership with you as USDA pursues efforts to normalize cattle trade between the United States and Mexico.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

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