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Ed Schafer

Secretary

United States Department of Agriculture

1400 Independence Ave., S.W.

Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer:

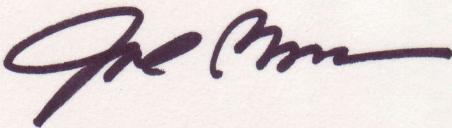
Last January, the USDA published a proposed rule to allow the importation of Argentine ruminant and ruminant products into the United States. Under the proposal, products from select regions of Argentina would be cleared for entry into the U.S. market despite well documented cases of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Argentina and other South American nations.

Many of my constituents have raised concerns with this plan and fear it could leave domestic cattle, sheep, goats and other livestock vulnerable to FMD—a highly contagious airborne disease considered by the American Veterinary Medical Association to be the most economically damaging of livestock diseases.

I also question if it is appropriate to consider rewarding Argentina with this market access right now. A new president recently took the reigns in Argentina, and our government's priority should be to have the new Argentine Administration repay its debts, make needed reforms and live up to a higher standard. Our government should not look to reward Argentina by giving away valuable access to the U.S. meat market—especially not when such access would weaken our defenses against FMD and leave U.S. ranchers vulnerable.

Thank you for your attention to these matters and your prompt reply to these concerns. Please provide my office with an update of the status of this proposal as soon as possible. You can contact me or my aide John Lowrey at phone number (202) 225-6161, or via e-mail at john.lowrey@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



JOE BACA, Congressman
43rd Congressional District



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

March 3, 2008

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