



Canadian Cattlemen's Association

CCA Responds

CCA President rebuts hoax email attack on beef purchasing practices of McDonald's

November 3, 2009

Since 2003, McDonald's Canada has used only Canadian beef in their hamburgers. However in 2009, purchasing practices for their Canadian restaurants have repeatedly come under attack through a malicious, viral e-mail hoax. It falsely states that McDonald's purchases off-shore beef for these purposes.

This malicious hoax circulated for many years in the United States, falsely implicating the Texas Cattle Feeders as the message source. In the Canadian version, it wrongly states that the message originated with the Alberta Cattle Feeders Association. In both cases these completely false messages are full of outright lies. In fact, it potentially hurts the individuals it professes to protect. Anyone circulating this message perpetuates the damage.

So let's correct some import facts. For many decades as our Canadian industry has downsized, Canada reduced its slaughter of cull animals (lean meat), forcing food service companies to source additional supplies off-shore. This off-shore sourcing enables Canada to meet its obligations under the WTO (World Trade Organization) which requires that we allow 76,409 tonnes of non-NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) beef in, tariff-free.

Prior to 2003, imports of non-NAFTA beef were much higher in order to create the 75-80 per cent lean product suitable for the hamburger trade. We imported as much as 130,00 tonnes of lean, beef trim to blend with our Canadian fed cattle trim (which is approximately 50 per cent fat), to achieve the required percentage.

Allowing product into Canada based on quality and safety, is the responsibility of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). It solely ensures that product coming into Canada meets the appropriate criteria and it doesn't compromise on these regulatory requirements. This means that importers cannot import anything that falls below the minimum allowable product for Canada, but they may request higher quality attributes on imported products.

McDonald's applies some of the most stringent food safety criteria and practices worldwide in their food processing operations. This food safety pillar, aimed at protecting their customers, is foundational to their global brand, protecting its value now worth billions of dollars. To provide the assurance of quality their consumers rely on, McDonald's does not compromise on food safety.

Having personally toured McDonald's food processing facilities which prepares products for their restaurants, I can tell you unequivocally that McDonald's implements extremely safe production practices. These same practices apply throughout their entire food supply chain.

Unfortunately these days malicious, viral emails containing outright lies are easily circulated denigrating a company committed to our industry. In this case, it ultimately targets our industry by attacking a buyer that commits to purchasing Canadian product to ensure that Canadian consumers understand that their food safety is a fundamental priority of their business.

As the world's largest beef customer – McDonald's has demonstrated their outstanding commitment to Canadian beef as evidence by their track record of purchasing our beef for their Canadian restaurants since 2003.

To set the facts straight, please pass this message along to your email string on my behalf. I also ask that you caution anyone receiving a 'forward' or chain messages to check their facts before circulating it in the future. Too often these messages are full of false information that hurts many.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Wildeman".

Brad Wildeman
President