



Western Stock Growers' Association

NEWS RELEASE
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In Wake of XL Recall Producers Require Accountability

In a letter sent out three weeks ago, the Western Stock Growers' Association (WSGA) respectfully asked the Government of Canada to launch an independent investigation into the crisis surrounding the closing and long process to reopen the XL beef plant in Brooks.

Last week, producers at an Alberta Beef Producers zone meeting in Fort Macleod supported a motion to call for an inquiry that will go beyond the internal review so far promised by government. This motion came from a discussion critical of how the issue was handled and concerns on how to avoid such preventable crises in the future.

"The roles of all involved including the Operator, the CFIA, the USDA and Governments must be explored. Everyone from the cattle producer to the consumer holds a measure of responsibility to keep the food on our families' plates safe," says Phil Rowland, WSGA President. "We applaud the ABP for joining our efforts in requesting a full investigation into the recall."

Some of the unanswered questions WSGA requested the government address in a thorough investigation include:

1. When an outside audit conducted in May by Silliker Inc. found that sampling of trim product was "inconsistent" with the standard, why was not a Corrective Action Request (CAR) issued?
2. When a 2010 survey by FSIS indicated that the majority of the largest meat packers diverted or destroyed all trim in a batch or on a day if 5 percent of its tests were positive for E.coli O157:H7 and the HACCP plan for XL only diverted product if more than 10 percent of a batch tested positive or more than 20 percent of the days production was tainted, why did the CFIA approve this process?
3. Between Sept 17th and Oct 12th, CFIA issued 17 Health Hazard Alert updates, each of which has expanded the list of recalled products in excess of 1800 products and an estimated recall of 45 million pounds. What parameters did CFIA use in making these decisions?
4. As 17 Health Hazard Alerts is very high considering it was for the same event, did the CFIA give any thought or regard for the damage to the reputation of the beef industry?
5. Of the recalled shipments of beef, how many tests were positive for E.coli O157:H7?
6. Is it unusual to recall whole muscle cuts and why was it deemed necessary in this situation?
7. Why did the CFIA not think it would be useful to require companies to analyze test results for the potentially fatal E.coli O157:H7?

8. Why were most of the CFIA inspectors at the plant not trained in Compliance Verification System (CVS)?
9. The Canadian Traceability System is comprised of two components that being on the live side with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) and on the processed side with Canadian Food Product Traceability (CFPT). Why is the CCIA mandatory and punishable by fines whereas the CFPT is voluntary and participation is much lower with no consequences of non-compliance?

“In order to envision the future we must know exactly what happened in the past. It would be a shame to throw lives and businesses in jeopardy without learning the exact cause of the crisis,” says Rowland. “And we won’t know the answer to this unless there is an independent investigation.”

For a copy of the complete letter sent to all levels of the four western provincial governments as well as the Prime Minister and federal agriculture minister, visit the WSGA website.

Established in 1896, WSGA is a producer organization driven by policy development, focusing on a strong free market approach to production and marketing of livestock. WSGA’s main priority is protection of the livestock producer through advocacy. WSGA encourages interaction within industry leaders that promotes education and helps define philosophical issues in agriculture.

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