

Beef from FMD-Infested Argentina After 10/28/14?

by Jim Eichstadt

We were very puzzled by one of two announcements issued August 28, 2014 by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for its plans to allow imports of fresh (chilled and frozen) beef from two regions of Argentina.

The first announcement lacked a proposed rule and public comment period on the agency's finding that Argentina's Patagonia region is free of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD). The omission of the proposal rule and public comment period is critical, because Argentina has a long and troubled history of FMD, and the proposed imports could spread this highly contagious disease to U.S. livestock herds. Further, the Patagonia region could easily be re-infected by the movement of livestock, wildlife, and other carriers of the virus from surrounding areas where FMD infestations persist. We turned to a leading livestock

trade policy expert – R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard – for clarification. Following is a key excerpt from Bullard's response:

“... APHIS went through a rulemaking in 2012 that changed the way it would allow countries to import into the U.S. if the country had ever had FMD. The change no longer requires USDA to go through a rulemaking, only a notice and comment period. So, USDA published its notice and comment period in January and the comment period regarding the Patagonia region of Argentina is over and USDA has now made its decision. The effective date of USDA's FMD-free classification is Oct. 28, 2014. That means it is a done deal and after FSIS [USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service] certifies plants in the Patagonia region, imports can begin after Oct. 28.”

—Bill Bullard, CEO of R-CALF USA