

HB 17-1234 – FACT SHEET

Colorado Retailers to Display Country of Origin of Beef

Consumers – HB 17-1234 allows Colorado consumers to choose between U.S. beef and foreign beef.

 “**U.S.A. Beef**” on a placard shall be beef “exclusively from animals born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States or born and raised in Alaska or Hawaii and transported for a period of not more than sixty days through Canada to the United States and slaughtered in the United States.”

- “**Imported**” on a placard shall be beef “from any animal born, raised, or slaughtered in any foreign country,” indicating “each country.”

Restaurants – HB 17-1234 applies to Colorado retailers selling beef “at retail” to the public. It does not apply to restaurants. Although, restaurants would have the information they need to inform their patrons of the country of origin of their prepared beef if it was purchased from a Colorado retailer.

Food Safety – HB 17-1234 creates the opportunity for Colorado retailers to immediately remove beef from their shelves when reports of rancid meat occur (e.g., March 17, 2017, Brazil) or when there is a meat-borne illness outbreak in a country that imports beef to the United States (e.g., Sept. 28, 2012, Public Health Alert: 2.5 million pounds of imported Canadian beef adulterated with E. coli 0157:H7).

Capitalism – HB 17-1234 allows U.S. beef to compete with foreign beef in Colorado. This would create an opportunity for U.S. producers to promote and advertise “U.S.A. Beef” in Colorado. A competitive market does not exist when country of origin information is concealed by the packers.

 U.S. farmers and ranchers would have the opportunity to benefit from the fact that they produce their cattle under more stringent health and environmental standards. For example, the new federal Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) does not apply outside of the United States.

Cattle Industry – HB 17-1234 takes a step in the right direction to slow the decline of U.S. beef cow operations. According to the 2012 *Census of Agriculture*, there were 729,000 beef cow operations in the United States in 2012, a five percent decline from 2007.

- The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service reported that U.S. beef cow operations declined by over 170,000 operations between 1992 and 2012.
- The depressed state of the U.S. cattle industry is largely attributed to the concentration of the packing industry. Four multinational companies control over eighty percent of the market, giving them power to drive down U.S. cattle prices by importing foreign beef and cattle.

 An increased demand for “U.S.A Beef” would cause the packers to purchase more U.S. cattle and would allow *competition* to influence U.S. cattle prices, which would partially inhibit the packers’ current ability to sell beef at record prices while depressing producer prices.

Colorado – HB 17-1234 recognizes the importance of food safety and food choice to Coloradans, and the importance of cow/calf producers to Colorado’s economy. These issues have been on a more than twenty-year roller coaster at the federal level. It’s time for Colorado to take the reins!

Number of All Cattle and Beef Cow Operations, United States, 1992-2012

Thousand operations

