



State of New Mexico

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For immediate release

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1/08/04

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Governor Bill Richardson has productive meetings On Mad Cow Disease

WASHINGTON - Governor Bill Richardson and state Agriculture Secretary Miley Gonzalez, continuing their efforts to protect New Mexico's livestock industry, said they had productive meetings today with U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman and ambassadors from South Korea and Japan about Mad Cow disease.

"I drove home the point, which was well received, that New Mexico beef is safe and not contaminated," Governor Richardson said following today's meetings with Secretary Veneman, South Korea's Ambassador Han Sung Joo and Japanese Ambassador Ryozo Kato. "I emphasized that a prolonged ban on U.S. beef and beef products has a major impact on New Mexico's economy."

"Secretary Veneman is taking aggressive steps by sending delegations to Mexico, Japan and South Korea to explain how the U.S. is working proactively to deal with this problem," Governor Bill Richardson said. "The Secretary also invited inspections from these three countries, and Japan has already sent a delegation. The administration is doing the right thing by being very open and working collaboratively with states."

Governor Richardson said Ambassador Han told him the ban is having a similar effect on South Korea's economy, and he was also looking forward to resuming trade with the U.S. Japanese Ambassador Kato told Governor Richardson that it is in his country's interest to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

“I was encouraged with my meetings with the ambassadors of South Korea and Japan,” Governor Richardson said. “I urged them to lift the ban on American beef, and I explained the situation in New Mexico.

“Ambassador Kato told me that U.S. beef is highly prized in Japan, and there really is no replacement for it,” Governor Richardson said. “But they believe they have to go through their whole inspection process.”

South Korea and Japan are the top two major markets for New Mexico beef and agriculture products.

“The ambassadors asked me to stay in close touch with them during this process,” Governor Richardson said. “They very much appreciated that I took the time to talk personally with them about it.”

Governor Richardson has also spoken with Mexican Agricultural Secretary Javier Uzabiaga Arroyo about that country’s temporary ban on livestock.

Governor Richardson and Secretary Gonzalez emphasized to the ambassadors that New Mexico has launched several aggressive initiatives, such as better tracking of cows, better cross-border cooperation and planning and early detection programs, to prevent or limit the spread of diseases such as Mad Cow Disease.

“They were impressed with our proactive efforts to prevent the spread of disease to New Mexico’s livestock,” Secretary Gonzalez said.