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Governor Bill Richardson Announces Reopening of Mexican Border to U.S. Cattle

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson and New Mexico Agriculture Secretary Miley Gonzalez announced that Mexico has reopened its border to U.S. cattle, paving the way for a cattle crossing Wednesday evening at Santa Teresa. This is the first cattle export to Mexico since many countries banned U.S. beef and beef products in 2003 as a result of Mad Cow Disease in the Pacific Northwest.

“While we had to endure long and frustrating delays, I am pleased that New Mexico’s livestock industry will resume trade with Mexico,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “This is good news for our livestock industry and for our economy, which was unfairly impacted by concerns about unsafe beef.”

U.S. government officials and the Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación agreed to reopen the border to shipments of breeding cattle from the United States.

Governor Richardson and Secretary Gonzalez met in the past with U.S. and Mexican officials after the ban to lobby them to reopen the border to exported beef. Governor Richardson also met with officials in Japan and South Korea.

Governor Richardson and Secretary Gonzalez launched several initiatives as a result of the cattle ban, 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.

Tom Bagwell, NMDA assistant director joined by NMDA marketing specialist, Raul Tellez, watched as the first of the 37 black Angus bulls crossed the border.

“After much time and a lot of work by many people on both sides of the border we are resuming open border commerce in breeding livestock,” Bagwell said. “This is a great opportunity to renew long-established relationships and to revitalize the livestock economy between México and the United States.”

These first 37 bulls were purchased by cattleman Jay Whetten of Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico and are to improve the genetics of his vast herd of Mexican cattle.

The many officials and agencies that helped make this happen include U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, Governor Bill Richardson, Secretary of Agriculture Dr. I. Miley Gonzalez, other border states commissioners and secretaries of agriculture as well as cattlemen, industry organizations, and animal health officials.

Special recognition goes to Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples who played a key role in the opening of the border.

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