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## Kerry, Dean Call For Improvements In Livestock Inspection

### DOW JONES NEWSWIRES

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP)--Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry on Sunday proposed several changes to the system of monitoring livestock in response to the discovery of mad cow disease in the U.S.

Kerry's plan calls for a national tracking system, a sharp increase in the testing of cattle for the disease and an unspecified level of financial aid to farmers who stand to suffer as a result of the discovery.

Howard Dean, also campaigning in Iowa, called on the Department of Agriculture to implement immediately a number of measures to restore confidence in the U.S. beef industry.

Since the announcement that a now-slaughtered Holstein cow from Washington state was sick with mad cow disease, more than two dozen countries have halted imports of U.S. beef, valued at \$3.4 billion a year.

"The current mad cow investigation underscores the urgent need for a national system to make diseased livestock easier to track and contain," Kerry, a Massachusetts senator, said in a statement.

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Kerry said downed animals - those too sick or injured to stand or walk unassisted - that are being tested for the disease shouldn't be processed until the results are known.

In the Washington state case, the sick cow was slaughtered and its meat distributed 13 days before preliminary tests confirmed the presence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, also known as mad cow

disease.

"It's common sense, if a cow is suspect it should be tested and the results should be back before it is processed and in the food supply," Kerry said in Iowa, where the Jan. 19 precinct caucuses launch the presidential nominating season and the cattle industry is a significant force in the state's economy.

Kerry also called for a national system to track the movement of livestock, and a sharp increase in Agriculture Department testing of cattle for the disease. Over nine years, only 30,000 of the 300 million cattle slaughtered have been tested for the disease, he said.

Another element of his proposal is a ban on the sale of the brains and vertebrae of cattle, portions of the animal affected by the disease. Kerry also called for "fair and equitable" financial assistance for those hurt by the crisis, including farmers, but did not say how much money they should be given.

Dean, meanwhile, faulted the administration for objecting to a proposed ban on the slaughter of downed cattle, and for resisting efforts to improve the system of tracking cattle.

"We need a system of instant traceability for all cattle," Dean said in a statement. "The discovery of a single cow with (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) has effectively halted any and all beef exports from this country. A larger outbreak of BSE or some other livestock disease could devastate rural economies.

"This administration has not taken such dangers seriously," Dean said.

In an interview with The Associated Press last week, Dean said he supported federal financial assistance for the cattle industry as a result of the discovery of mad cow disease.

Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt on Saturday criticized President George W. Bush for refusing to pay for country-of-origin labeling for meat, and ignoring the Agriculture Department's and the Food and Drug Administration's need for more money to inspect agricultural imports.

"We need a president who is committed to the right of American consumers to know where their meat is coming from and not to the huge special interests that are fighting to keep safety regulations out of our food supply," Gephardt said.

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