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White House Looking At Options To Control Mad Cow Disease

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Of DOW JONES NEWSWIRES

WASHINGTON -- The Bush administration said Monday it was looking at new options to ensure the nation's beef supply is free of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease.

However, White House Deputy Spokesman Trent Duffy said the recent discovery of a cow with the illness wasn't the trigger for the effort to safeguard cattle.

"Since the discovery of BSE in Canada in May, the administration has looked at all the options available to the federal government to further strengthen these safeguards so that we can continue to protect public health and the safety of the food supply," Duffy said.

Duffy added President George W. Bush is receiving regular updates on the situation and was briefed Sunday by Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman on steps the federal government is taking to track the tainted meat in the system. Since the discovery of the sick cow, the investigation has traced meat from the slaughter plant where the animal was processed to eight states.

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Duffy said the president was concerned about the impact of the discovery of BSE in a U.S. cow, but added the bigger concern was to take the steps needed to limit the fallout from the situation. U.S.

officials have said they believe the cow was imported from Alberta, Canada.

"The fact is - is that we need to do the appropriate things to deal with the situation so that our longer-term and shorter-term economy is not harmed," Duffy said.

He had no specific comment on the decline in cattle future prices as a result of the discovery. Likewise, he had no comment on Japan's decision to ban U.S. beef imports, a key customer for the U.S. beef industry.

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