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## New Revelations Add To Downer Cows Controversy

POSTED: 5:30 p.m. PDT June 12, 2003

[Chris Halsne](#)

KIRO 7 Eyewitness News Investigative Reporter

### Video



[New Revelations Add To Downer Cows Controversy](#)

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New, disturbing revelations from a former state agriculture employee add fuel the controversy over downer cows.

Sick, dying, and crippled cattle are no longer welcome at Washington state slaughterhouses.

That ban is the direct result of a KIRO Team 7 Investigation into the downer cattle industry.

It's a ban that makes big beef and dairy interests furious, animal rights groups ecstatic.

The beef and dairy industries believe hamburger meat derived from downers is perfectly good to eat. Ranchers say they're losing money by now not being able to turning their dying dairy cows into food. Opponents of the practice say it's about time processing of downers ends, to better protect consumers.

### SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

[KIRO-TV's Response To Beef and Dairy Industry Criticism of the Downer Cows Investigation](#)

Mike Anagnos is relieved that downer cattle are no longer entering meat-packing plants in Washington. He's a former brand inspector for the state Department of Agriculture.

He says he witnessed firsthand -- while on duty -- appalling abuse of weakened, often sick cows outside Midway Meats in Chehalis.

Chris: "You witnessed at Midway Meats, cows dragged off a trailer?"

Mike: "Oh, yes!"

Chris: "You witnessed at Midway Meats a cow -- not stunned -- hung

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by the neck and hauled inside?"

Mike: "Yah!"

Chris: "Midway Meats says that would never happen, it's against the rules."

Mike: "That's a lie. That's a lie. It happens on a daily basis."

But what Mike says disturbs him most was an apparent lack of a proper federal inspection of at-risk cattle in the parking lot of Midway Meats.

"The inspector, when she would get out there -- most of the time not inspecting the cattle -- but when she did, the reflex test, she'd get about eight to 10 inches from the cow's face ... go like this. If the eye moved, flicked, blinked, the cow would pass."

## SURVEY

**Should the USDA allow downer cows to be turned into hamburger and other meat products?**


Yes.

No.

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## DOWNER COWS INVESTIGATION

 [Meat From Dying, Sick Or Diseased Cows Getting into Food](#)

*Aired Oct. 31, 2002, 5 p. m.*

 [Volatile Reaction From Viewers, Feds, To Meat Investigation](#)

*Aired Oct. 31, 2002, 11 p. m.*

 [Downer Cows' Treatment May Be Illegal](#)

*Aired Nov. 1, 2002, 5 p. m.*

 [Downer Industry Thrives Despite Consumers' Concerns](#)

*Aired Nov. 1, 2002, 11 p. m.*

Mike's testimony is consistent with what KIRO-TV videotaped last year during extensive surveillance of Midway Meats.

Dr. Peggy Larson is a former USDA inspector, now retired as Vermont's state veterinarian. She watched our videotape and wonders aloud about a failure in USDA inspections.

"You must look at this cow before it's dead. You have to walk around the cow, view it from all sides. If you're suspicious this cow may have a disease, you're obligated to take a temperature. I never saw any of the inspectors doing an ante-mortem inspection on any of these cattle," Dr. Larson said.

Jay Gordon raises dairy cattle for a living and lobbies on behalf of his industry. He says downer cows can produce quality hamburger and it's a shame to let so much meat go to waste.

"There's no place for us to send animals when she goes down and it happens despite all the best care for an animal," Gordon said.

Gordon says our investigation scared places like Midway Meats from accepting a perfectly legal product. Now ranchers are losing "a little" money.

"It obviously is a financial difficulty especially right now. Prices aren't doing that good. This certainly has an impact," Gordon said.

The Washington Beef Commission wrote KIRO-TV recently to complain about our coverage of downer cows, saying we were misinforming the public. KIRO-TV invited the beef commission to do

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an interview and back up that claim. They refused.

Beef industry promoters instead asked us to speak with Dr. Robert Mead, Washington's State Vet.

He reviewed our video of downer cows being dragged, hung, hoisted to slaughter at Midway Meats and saw nothing out of the ordinary.

"I can't tell what type of inspection was done or what the inspectors required of plant personnel. That's about all I can tell is that there was an inspector present through most of the process there," Dr. Mead said.

Other national experts, who unlike Dr Mead have experience as USDA inspectors, say our videotape shows meat inspectors failing to follow food safety codes and cows improperly stunned.

Dr. Mead isn't so sure.

"You can't do an evaluation of their adherence to the humane slaughter act through this type of video. You don't see everything," Dr. Mead said.

Mike Anagnos, who worked for Dr. Mead, says his boss should have known about allegations of mistreatment and improper inspections of animals at Midway Meats.

"I voiced my concerns about those animals many times. I was told 'That's not your job.'"

When KIRO Team 7 Investigators asked high-ranking state agriculture officials his complaints, we were told to wait for an answer until they researched their records.

"They wouldn't be rallying around the wagons and gathering up a full counterstrike if you didn't bring up something they know is true," Anagnos said.

The Washington Beef and Dairy Commissions have been conducting a public relations campaign, criticizing KIRO-TV for broadcasting the stories of downer cows you just saw. You may not know, but you're paying for this government agency to attack our investigation.

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## SURVEY

**Should the USDA require labeling of products containing downer meat?**

Yes.

No.

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