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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA SIGNS INTERIM RULE CHANGING IDAHO'S BRUCELLOSIS STATUS TO 'CLASS A'

(BOISE) Idaho has officially lost its Brucellosis Class Free status, and cattle will now have to undergo an increased testing regimen in order to be shipped out of state.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today notified the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) that the state is now designated Brucellosis "Class A," a reduction from the "Brucellosis-Free" status the state has enjoyed since 1991.

Class A status will require increased testing of certain cattle in Idaho that are not going directly to slaughter. ISDA will also be testing cattle herds in eastern Idaho that have contact with wild elk in the winter time and are identified as "high-risk."

Dr. Greg Ledbetter, ISDA Division of Animal Industries administrator, again reminded the public that a reduction in brucellosis status is no cause for concern about the safety of meat and milk products from Idaho.

"Cooking meat and pasteurization of milk destroys the *Brucella* organism," Ledbetter said. "Therefore it remains highly unlikely for humans to get brucellosis from consuming meat or dairy products."

The main risk for humans to get brucellosis is through direct contact with placental or fetal fluids from infected animals, and that risk applies almost entirely to people who work with cattle, not beef consumers, said Ledbetter.

ISDA is exploring all legal options to appeal the USDA's decision.

In October, brucellosis was discovered in a Swan Valley cattle herd. Later, a virgin heifer from that herd was traced to a small feedlot near Arco. Since that time, nearly 2,000 additional animals in 15 herds from the area have been tested. No additional Brucellosis reactors have been found.

"We have already begun the process of working toward regaining our Brucellosis-Free designation," ISDA Director Pat Takasugi said. "The cattle industry and the department are partners in this effort, and we are working cooperatively toward this end."

"We appreciate the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's quick action on this matter, and we will continue to work with our producers as well as state and federal agencies so that the state can reapply for Brucellosis-Free status in December," said Lloyd Knight, executive director of the Idaho Cattle Association.

Idaho can apply to regain its Brucellosis-Free status if no new cases emerge before

December of this year.

It is believed that bison and elk in the Greater Yellowstone Area are the source of the *Brucella* bacteria in the region.

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