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*Federal Regulation of Mad Cow Disease Risks*

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Abstract by Lisa Pettinati

The author examines the regulatory scheme directed at the beef industry to protect consumers from mad cow disease. The article highlights, in 2003, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture first acknowledged the threat of the illness in America. Such public attention resulted in governmental actions taken to protect the industry, while Congress also sought to extend regulations to prevent reoccurrences.

The author begins by discussing the severity of consuming contaminated beef, and then moves to explain the current governmental implementation of firewalls, which USDA enacted to protect consumers from contracting mad cow disease. Because of the human risk involved, however, the author argues that both the firewall technique and its enforcement fail to meet consumer protection objectives. By examining the statutory language in the USDA SRM Interim Final Rule, the article identifies the overall shortcomings of the law, and therefore concludes that unless specific governmental agencies adopt legislative measures to correct the loopholes, more Americans will suffer from its inadequacy.

The first part of the article expresses the health risks that stem from mad cow disease. The second part of the article considers the existing regulations intended to protect consumers. The third and fourth parts deliver a critique on why the current governmental action is failing. The fifth part highlights reforms that would better ensure the quality of American beef.