

September 17, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Livestock Producers Want Clarification from USDA on Intent of Packer/Retailer Loophole in Interim Final Rule**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) — R-CALF USA joined in a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today to request clarification of a loophole in the agency's Interim Final Rule (IFR) on mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) that is being perceived by many producers as a direct violation of the COOL law passed by Congress.

Although the law prohibits labeling beef from animals exclusively born, raised and slaughtered in the U.S. with anything other than the exclusive USA label, the IFR would allow meatpackers to avoid the USA label and, instead, label USA beef with a multiple-country-of-origin label such as "Product of the United States, Canada and Mexico."

"If this isn't changed immediately — before the law takes effect on Sept. 30 — then USDA's actions will accomplish what the multinational meatpackers have been after all along: a North American meat label that would make it impossible to differentiate beef produced from U.S. cattle from beef that comes from foreign cattle," said R-CALF USA President/Region VI Director Max Thornsberry, a Missouri veterinarian who also chairs the group's animal health committee. "This is a slap in the face to the thousands of independent U.S. cattle producers who have fought for more than six years for the right to proudly market their beef products from cattle that are exclusively born, raised and slaughtered here in the United States of America.

"Cattle producers here know their beef is the safest and most wholesome in the world and they know consumers want to know where their food comes from, especially in light of all the recent food safety scares," he continued. "Unfortunately, the IFR would enable multinational packers to continue selling to unsuspecting consumers lower-quality beef that may well have been imported from countries that are allowed to use antibiotics and pesticides that are banned from use in cattle here in the United States."

"It is crucial for USDA to immediately correct this gross misinterpretation of the

COOL law,” said R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard. “Otherwise, U.S. consumers will be misled into believing that they don’t have the option of purchasing an exclusive USA product.”

*Note: To obtain a copy of this letter, contact R-CALF USA Communications Coordinator Shae Dodson.*

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*R-CALF USA (Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America) is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the continued profitability and viability of the U.S. cattle industry. R-CALF USA represents thousands of U.S. cattle producers on trade and marketing issues. Members are located across 47 states and are primarily cow-calf operators, cattle backgrounders, and/or feedlot owners. R-CALF USA has dozens of affiliate organizations and various main-street businesses are associate members. For more information, visit [www.r-calfusa.com](http://www.r-calfusa.com) or call 406-252-2516.*