

WASHINGTON FARM BUREAU NEWSWATCH

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SOUTH KOREA TODAY AGREED TO RESUME IMPORTS OF SOME AMERICAN BEEF, banned two years ago over fears of mad cow disease. (AP/Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Jan. 13) The South Korean government said it would begin importing American beef from animals less than 30 months old by the end of March. However, the agreement excludes beef ribs, which accounted for 60 percent of South Korea's U.S. beef imports before the ban. South Korea said it would continue to ban any bones from U.S. cattle because material inside bones, including marrow, is considered at-risk for BSE.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IS USING SATELLITES TO MONITOR compliance with farm programs and crack down on crop insurance fraud. (AP/Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Jan. 13) Satellite imaging technology has been used in cases ranging from violations of waste discharge regulations by a hog confinement facility to lawsuits stemming from herbicide applications. Satellites can be used to monitor when farmers plant their acreage, how they irrigate and what crops they grow. Last year, satellite images were used to help convict a North Carolina farmer of faking weather damage by having workers throw ice cubes on a field of tomatoes and beating the plants. The USDA Risk Management Agency has used satellite images in about 100 cases since beginning a crackdown on fraud in 2001, but places about 1,500 farms annually on a watch list, followed up by ground inspections.

THE UNITED FARM WORKERS UNION HAS LEFT THE AFL-CIO TO JOIN A GROUP OF breakaway unions known as the Change to Win Coalition. (AP/Spokane Spokesman-Review, Jan. 13) The UFW said the change would allow the union to be more aggressive in "finding new ways to pursue employers that fiercely resist the right of workers to organize." The Teamsters and the Service Employees International Union formed the Change to Win Coalition when they left the AFL-CIO last summer. The group now also includes the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Laborers International Union of North America.

TWO BILLS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE THAT WOULD require "cow share" programs to be inspected and licensed as dairies. (Longview Daily News, Jan. 12) The bills were introduced in response to several cases of E. coli infections linked to unpasteurized milk provided to "shareholders" by a farm in Cowlitz County. The farm owners had argued that they sold shares in their cows and collected the milk for the shareowners, so they were not required to be licensed. Both bills would still allow dairies to sell raw milk.

***THE POLLUTION CONTROL HEARINGS BOARD HAS UPHELD A DEPARTMENT OF Ecology decision that a Yakima developer lost the water rights it acquired from Washington Beef when it purchased a defunct slaughterhouse because of non-use. (Yakima Herald-Republic, Jan. 13, 2006) The developer, Ahtanum Ridge Business Park, bought the property, including the water rights, in 1995 for \$1.3 million. The developer then began negotiating to sell the water right to the city of Union Gap. However, Ecology later determined that no agreement had been reached with Union Gap after five continuous years of non-use. Under state law, the water right reverts to the state.***

FARMERS AND RANCHERS WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH U.S. REP. Cathy McMorris, R-Wash., next week during the Spokane Ag Show and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum. The Lincoln County Farm Bureau is sponsoring a "town hall" session with McMorris at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 17, in Suite C of the Doubletree Hotel in downtown Spokane.

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