



# Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

## Obama takes on food safety

*One of the lead stories in the national news the weekend before we went to press was President Barack Obama's announced intention to overhaul the nation's food safety system. Included among the reports were the naming of a new head for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the formation of a Food Safety Working Group to coordinate food safety laws and advise the President on how to update them.*

### Certain things

"I've often said that I don't believe government has the answer to every problem or that it can do all things for all people," President Obama said. "We are a nation built on the strength of individual initiative. But there are certain things that we can't do on our own. There are certain things only a government can do. And one of those things is ensuring that the foods we eat, and the medicines we take, are safe and don't cause us harm."

The President said that was the mission of the FDA, and a mission shared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and "a variety of other agencies and offices at just about every level of government."

Underfunding and understaffing of FDA has provided resources to inspect only 7,000 of 150,000 processing plants and warehouses, he said, leaving 95% uninspected.

"That is a hazard to public health. It is unacceptable," said the President. "And it

will change under the leadership of Dr. Margaret Hamburg, whom I am appointing today as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration." Appointed deputy commissioner was Baltimore Health Commissioner Joshua Sharfstein.

One sentence in the transcript of Obama's presentation referred to cows: "As part of our commitment to public health, our Agriculture Department is closing a loophole in the system to ensure that diseased cows don't find their way into the food supply."

### Popular press

From that, MSNBC ran a story with the headline "Obama bans 'downer' cows from food supply" and the deck "President says current food safety system is a 'hazard to public health.'" The article quoted as a secondary source Wayne Paccelle of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Unfortunately, the article just called Paccelle "the Humane Society's president and chief executive," leaving open to confusion

the animal rights activist group with your local Humane Society.

Other media ran articles that more reflected the address, but one has to question:

- How will this affect our credibility with export markets?
- What will this mean in terms of regulations for producers?
- How large a voice will animal rights activists have in the future regulation of our industry?

In the March 16, 2009, Angus eList, we provided links to the transcript of President Obama's address and the reports provided by two U.S. news agencies and one British news agency, which show the range of treatment various media agencies gave this news item (see the March 16 News Update archived at [www.anguselist.com](http://www.anguselist.com)).

The same e-List shares the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announcement of the final rule to amend the federal meat inspection regulations to require a complete ban on the slaughter of cattle that become non-ambulatory disabled after passing initial inspection by Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) personnel.

Stay alert. Stay informed.

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