National Cattle Feeders' Association
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Trade Negotiations Division
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Government of Canada

The National Cattle Feeders' Association (NCFA) is writing regarding the Government of Canada's new counter-tariffs on imports from the United States (US). While we appreciate that beef is not currently included among the products subject to counter-tariffs, we want to reiterate the importance of ensuring it remains exempt.

NCFA is the voice of Canada's cattle feeders and we work to improve the growth, sustainability, and competitiveness of cattle production across Canada.

NCFA supports a strong and strategic Canadian response to US trade actions, while urging the government to avoid countermeasures that would unintentionally increase costs or disrupt the highly integrated North American beef supply chain.

Integrated Canada-US Market

Canada and the US beef industries operate as a highly integrated North American market. Cattle, beef, feed ingredients and animal health products move across the border to support production, processing capacity and food security on both sides. Cattle may cross the border at different stages of production and can result in cattle crossing the border more than once in their lifetime. Canadian cattle feeders also rely on predictable access to US inputs when domestic or alternative supplies are unavailable, insufficient or uneconomic.

This integration means that tariffs affecting cattle and beef can quickly create costs throughout the value chain. Maintaining the efficient movement of live cattle and beef is important to keeping feedlots full, supporting Canadian processing capacity and preserving competitive market options for Canadian producers.

The same is true for essential production inputs. Feed ingredients and veterinary medicines and supplies are critical to maintaining animal health and welfare and continuity of production.

Request

NCFA recommends that products essential to the Canadian beef and cattle-feeding sector be and remain exempt from Canadian counter-tariffs.

We are asking that exemptions be applied broadly to the following categories where they are captured by current or future countermeasures:

- Beef and beef products
- Live cattle
- Feed and feed ingredients
- Veterinary medicines, animal health products and essential veterinary supplies

Rationale

Beef and Live Cattle

In 2024, Canada exported $2.19 billion of live cattle to the US and imported $541 million of live cattle from the US. The US is the primary destination for nearly all Canadian live cattle exports and the main source for almost all Canadian live cattle imports. The challenges of transporting live animals over long distances foster a strong interdependence between the Canada-US cattle industry.

Applying Canadian counter-tariffs to beef or live cattle would add costs within the supply chain without addressing the underlying trade dispute. It could reduce competitiveness for Canadian cattle feeders, processors and the broader beef sector, while limiting market flexibility for producers.

Feed and Feed Ingredients

Feed is the largest and most critical input for cattle feeders. Canadian feedlots use a range of grains, co-products and other feed ingredients, with requirements varying by region, season, crop conditions and availability. US supplies can be essential when Canadian production is insufficient or when transportation and regional availability make other sources impractical.

Cattle are fed carefully formulated rations, and feed ingredients cannot always be quickly or economically substituted. Counter-tariffs on feed or feed ingredients would raise production costs and could create animal nutrition and welfare challenges. With cattle feeders operating on tight margins and competing directly with US feeders, reliable access to competitively priced feed is essential.

Veterinary Medicines, Supplies, and Animal Health Products

Canadian cattle feeders require reliable access to veterinary medicines, vaccines, animal health products and essential veterinary supplies to prevent and treat disease and maintain high standards of animal care. Some products may have limited Canadian or non-US alternatives, and disruptions or added costs can directly affect animal health and welfare.

These products should not become collateral damage in a trade response. Where veterinary or animal health products are sourced from the US because equivalent supplies are not reasonably available elsewhere, they should remain exempt from counter-tariffs or be eligible for timely tariff relief.

Conclusion

NCFA recognizes the Government of Canada's need to respond firmly to US tariffs. At the same time, countermeasures should be designed to avoid harming Canadian producers and processors that depend on integrated North American supply chains. Exempting beef, live cattle, feed and feed ingredients, and veterinary medicines and supplies would help ensure Canada's response does not undermine the competitiveness, animal welfare or food-production capacity of the Canadian beef sector.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of our requests. NCFA's strong preference remains tariff-free trade in cattle, beef and the essential inputs required to produce them. Where tariffs are imposed, Canada should ensure its countermeasures do not create an unintended competitive disadvantage for Canadian cattle feeders or compromise animal health and welfare.

The Canadian beef sector's competitiveness depends on the predictable movement of cattle, beef and essential production inputs across the Canada-US border. Protecting that integrated supply chain will help keep Canadian cattle feeders, processors and the broader beef sector strong.

Sincerely,

Janice Tranberg
President & CEO
National Cattle Feeders' Association