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**Beef is Perfectly Safe: Positive Test Result Should Not Cause Concern
Prevention Strategies Working to Staunch BSE in U.S., says AMI**

(Washington, D.C. - June 24, 2005) Today's announcement that an animal has tested positive for BSE should not cause consumer concern because our beef is, and has been, completely safe, says AMI President and CEO Patrick Boyle. "The food supply remains safe because consumption of beef has never been shown to cause BSE-related human illness," Boyle noted. The positive result was confirmed by the BSE Reference Laboratory in Weybridge, England and is the second case of BSE diagnosed in the United States.

"This test result should be seen for what it truly is - proof positive that the surveillance system for BSE in the United States is working. The enhanced testing program that the government started on June 1, 2004 is part of the multi-firewall system that this country has undertaken for nearly 15 years to staunch BSE," Boyle added. "In other words, the revelation that a new case of BSE has been found should have no net effect on consumers or producers," he added.

The United States has been conducting random BSE tests of its cattle for over a decade. The enhanced surveillance program, which has tested more than 388,000 animals since June 2004, is a tool used by the government to gain scientific knowledge about the prevalence of BSE in the United States and to gauge the effectiveness of methods we've used to combat it. "It's critical to not confuse the test results with the issue of food safety, since all parts from all cattle that could contain BSE are uniformly removed and eliminated from the human food supply at processing," he added.

There has been much confusion about the outbreak of BSE in Europe and how it spread to the human population. Boyle called likening the scenario in the United States to that of Europe "comparing apples to oranges" because people in Europe became ill after eating certain tissues from infected animals – notably their brains - not realizing that this posed a risk. By contrast, in the United States all tissues that could pose a risk to humans if an animal has BSE are removed by law and not permitted in the human food supply."

Since the beginning of the enhanced testing program, scientists and industry officials believed that a few additional cases are likely to appear in the course of the expanded testing. "To me, one, two, three, five other cases is not a crisis," William Hueston, a University of Minnesota veterinary epidemiologist and a member of a BSE advisory panel convened at the request of USDA Secretary Ann Veneman after the first BSE incident last December.

"Consumers should be confident that the food supply is safe because we've been fighting BSE in the United States for over a decade by taking proactive steps to stop both the spread of the

disease among cattle and to ensure that it doesn't enter the food supply," Boyle added. Those steps include:

- The mandatory requirement to remove the tissues from animals that can pose a risk to humans.
- The implementation of import controls on cattle and beef from countries with BSE.
- The FDA ban on feeding ruminant protein back to ruminants to prevent BSE from spreading among cattle.
- The USDA's enhanced testing program to detect and contain BSE when it is found in the United States.

Because of these strategies, experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Department of Agriculture say the risk of BSE to humans is near zero.

Consumers and media can obtain more information on BSE at www.meatsafety.org

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