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American Meat Institute Says U.S. Beef Is Safe, No Need For Concern over News of Inconclusive Test Result for BSE or 'Mad Cow Disease'

Washington, DC, Nov. 18, 2004 – The American Meat Institute (AMI) today said U.S. beef is safe and consumers needn't worry about news of a new "inconclusive" test result for BSE or "Mad Cow Disease".

"Inconclusive test results are just what they sound like – inconclusive," said AMI President J. Patrick Boyle. "Regardless of the outcome of this test result, U.S. beef is safe."

Boyle urged consumers and the media to remember that:

- If this test result is positive, consumers needn't worry because the infective agent has never been detected in beef – only in parts of the animal that are removed and not permitted to be sold for human consumption.
- In addition, consumers may be reassured to know that U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that beef from this animal was not released into commerce.
- The United States took proactive measures more than a decade before a single case was detected in an imported cow in 2003. These measures ensure that any case of BSE will be rapidly detected and contained and the public health will be protected.
- More than 113,000 high risk cattle have been tested for BSE since June under USDA's enhanced surveillance program. To date, none have been positive.

"Consumers should have absolute confidence in the U.S. government's ability to respond to this inconclusive test result swiftly and thoroughly," Boyle said. "If the test ultimately is positive, it must be treated as an animal health issue, not a public health concern. In fact, expert scientists say that thanks to U.S. efforts to protect cattle from this disease, the risk that BSE poses to consumers is so low it can scarcely be quantified."

Boyle urged consumers with questions to visit www.meatsafety.org.

AMI is the nation's oldest and largest meat industry association and represents packers and processors of beef, pork, lamb, veal and turkey.

Attention reporters and producers: on-camera interviews and beef production B-roll are available by calling or emailing media contacts listed above.