

MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon **David Hawker** MP

Federal Member for Wannon



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JUST ONE IMPORTED RUMP STEAK COULD TURN US INTO A MAD COW COUNTRY

Fresh on the heels of giving 'in-principal' approval to import live Foot and Mouth virus into the country, Labor's Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke will now allow the importation of beef and beef products from countries with reported cases of BSE (Mad Cow) disease.

Federal Member for Wannon, David Hawker, said despite the obvious question as to why we even need to import beef from BSE affected countries, he was extremely concerned about the havoc which could be wreaked on Australia's largest and third largest markets, namely the Japanese and South Korean markets, if BSE was ever found in Australia.

"In 2008, Australian beef shipments to Japan reached 364,302 tonnes, or 38% of total Australian beef exports for the year. In value terms, exports to Japan for the year were worth A\$2.061 billion, 41% of total export values," he said.

"Since BSE was discovered in the US beef exports to Japan collapsed. US beef imports into Japan in 2008 totalled 54,109 tonnes, up 59% from 34,148 tonnes in 2007, but still only 20% of the 2003 level.

"The Korean market tells a similar story, in 2003, the year of the first BSE outbreak in the United States, the US share of the Korean market was 69 percent, Australia's share was 21 percent, by 2005 Australia had 71 percent of the market and the US zero percent.

"Following the reintroduction of some US beef products back into the Korean market in April 2008, there was very strong resistance from Korean consumers, culminating in rioting in the streets."

Mr Hawker said he was also concerned that Australia's domestic beef market could be swamped by beef imports from BSE countries which would not have a Rudd Labor emissions trading tax on their beef products, making it almost impossible for Western Victorian producers to compete in the domestic market.

"As a result the sheer volume of beef coming into the Australia would obviously increase the risk of BSE entering the country," he said.

"Of additional concern is the fact the Rudd Government has cut the AQIS budget by over \$37 million in the recent budget, leading to the loss of 125 jobs from within Bio-security Australia and AQIS.

"Given the budgetary cuts to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and to Customs by the Labor Government, their refusal to implement the major recommendation of the Beale Review which was an immediate \$260 million per annum cash injection into Australia's bio-security programs, and the potential for the loss of our major beef markets in the event of a BSE outbreak, I am deeply concerned about moves to import beef from countries where BSE has been detected," Mr Hawker said.

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