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UNITED STATES
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ROSA L. DeLAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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June 13, 2014

The Honorable Mr. Brian Ronholm
Acting Under Secretary for Food Safety
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Dear Acting Under Secretary Ronholm,

I am deeply troubled by yesterday's news of the Fruitland American Meat establishment's recall of approximately 4,012 pounds of fresh beef products because of a potential risk for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), also referred to as mad cow disease. This potentially tainted beef, "Rain Crow Ranch Ribeye," went to a Whole Foods distribution center in Connecticut that serves stores in New England and to two restaurants, one in New York City and one in Kansas City, Missouri.

My understanding is that the potentially tainted meat was not processed correctly for the age of these animals, resulting in parts of the nervous system that may not have been completely removed, which is not compliant with agency regulations that require their removal in cattle 30 months of age and older.

According to the FSIS news release the affected product was produced between September 5, 2013 through April 24, 2014. On the heels of all these other massive recalls, e.g. Wolverine, El Rancho, etc., which also involved products produced over a long period of time, I question why it took ten months for this error to be discovered. Was this a matter of inadequate staffing levels, poor training, negligence, or some other reason? I want to learn more.

In view of this concern, I am requesting a briefing from you before June 27th, so that we can discuss these issues in depth. I look forward to meeting with you shortly.

Sincerely,

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress