

from our viewpoint...

Courts cut red tape on cattle imports

The secretary of agriculture, having won a federal appeal, is set to resume imports of Canadian beef stopped after discovery of a case of mad cow disease in that country.

Department of Agriculture scientists assured the courts that resuming imports is safe. It's not like the Canadian herds were infested with mad cows, after all. They found one there, and shipped one here.

The U.S. now its own case. So far, no human in either country has been infected.

As the Canadian cases hurt exports from that country, the U.S. case has hurt chances for beef exports by stockmen here.

There will be winners and losers. Packing plants and feed lots need more import beef. Some ranchers are fighting imports, not because they're unsafe, but because keeping Canadian beef out may help keep prices up here.

It's a free-trade world, though, and we all benefit from that in the long run. Let the imports come. It's the right thing to do.

As that happens, though, we'll urge the Agriculture Department to get with the program and tighten up controls designed to prevent mad cow disease from spreading.

Border inspections are important, but there are disturbing reports that unsafe feeding practices and incomplete inspections threaten the beef supply chain in this country.

Beef parts, especially brain and nerve tissue, have been banned from cattle feed in this country, but some are still being fed to other animals. That ought to stop.

The only safe use for these parts is rendering at temperatures designed to kill any life form. Some scientists argue that the beef form of the disease could spread to other species of livestock the same as it apparently does to humans.

How is it safe, then, to feed any beef nerve tissue to any species?

There also have been reports of contamination of beef feed with these banned tissues. We don't need to take that risk. This is a dangerous disease, and if it gets out of control, economic damage will be huge.

Our understanding of the sublife-form called prions thought to cause this and other brain-wasting diseases is minimal. We simply don't know how to handle them.

The government has banned private efforts to inspect more cattle than federal rules require. The theory is that universal testing is too expensive, and if one packer does it, everyone will have to.

That could be true, but why interfere with a plan to reopen the lucrative Japanese market? Or provide a safe, healthy alternative to market beef?

The end result would benefit everyone.

The Agriculture Department shouldn't play games with public health and safety, or with the safety of the beef industry. The tightest control will produce the most benefit.

As Canadian beef begins to flow, we need to be sure that all beef is safe, theirs and ours. — *Steve Haynes.*



Flights are quick, but wait time growing

Saturday morning I woke up at 5 a.m. in San Jose, Costa Rica.

When I went to bed it was 2 a.m. Sunday morning and I was home.

Air travel is an amazing thing. We take it so much for granted, and we gripe and moan when any little thing goes wrong. But in the space of four hours I flew from Central America to Dallas. It took two more hours in the air to get from Dallas to Denver and four in the car to get home to Oberlin.

That adds up to 10 hours. What happened to the rest?

Well, they told us to get to the airport three hours before our flight was scheduled. The guy ordering the cab from the hotel took them at their word and had us at check in before our eyes were properly opened. Then we got to sit around and eat bad American fast food at the airport.

The food in Costa Rica had been really good. The stuff they were selling us in the airport would have made my dog turn up her nose.

Luckily, American Airlines fed us a nice breakfast, which turned out to be lunch since we weren't hungry during our two-hour layover in



cynthia haynes

• open season

Dallas. Layover is kind of a bad term for the long lines we went through to clear immigration and customs. Then we had to go back through security and take off our shoes and belts, open our cases and generally get poked and prodded again. We had already done this once in Costa Rica.

You have to get your checked bags back to take through customs and then recheck them. This wasn't a long process, but by the time we were at our gate, it was almost time to board the plane for Denver.

As soon as we landed in Denver, we headed for the baggage claim.

This flight was going well. Although the three hours before leaving the airport in San Jose had been a bit much, everything else had gone smoothly.

We should have known.

A short, violent thunderstorm hit the airport just as we got to the baggage carousel.

When there is lightning within five miles of the airport, the ground crews quit working.

That means although planes can land, they can't pull up to their gates and no baggage gets unloaded.

We waited for about an hour and a half for the storm to move off and the bags to move out.

Friends gave us a lift back to our car, and we were ready to leave Denver at about 8:15 p.m. But that's mountain time. On central time that was 9:15 p.m. and we had a four-hour trip ahead.

By the time we got home and unloaded it was near 2 in the morning.

There's nothing like a few thousand miles and a 20-hour day to make you feel like a nail being hammered into a hard board.

Still, it was good to be home and it's really amazing to think how far we went in less than a day.

People kid us about the Wizard of Oz when we tell them we're from Kansas, but a pair of those ruby slippers sure sounded nice at 2 a.m.

Global warming not immediate problem

By Bill Steigerwald

Global warming is always a hot topic in liberal media circles, where the political and scientific consensus is that global climate change is occurring, it is a danger, it is caused by mankind and we need to start doing something serious about reversing it.

For a little balance, we called up Fred Singer, aka "the godfather of global warming denial." An expert on global climate change and a pioneer in the development of rocket and satellite technology, he holds a doctorate in physics from Princeton University and happens to be the guy who devised the basic instrument for measuring stratospheric ozone. Now president of the Science and Environmental Policy Project research group (www.sepp.org), his dozen books include "Hot Talk, Cold Science: Global Warming's Unfinished Debate." I talked to him by telephone from his offices in Arlington, Va.:

Q: Here's a line from a recent Mother Jones article: "There is overwhelming scientific consensus that greenhouse gases emitted by human activity are causing global average temperatures to rise." Is that true?

A: It's completely unsupported by any observation, but it's supported by computer climate models. In other words, the computer models indicate this. The observations do not.

Q: What's the best argument or proof that global warming is not happening?

A: The best proof are data taken of atmospheric temperature by two completely different methods. One is from instruments carried in satellites that look down on the atmosphere. The other is from instruments carried in balloons that ascend through the atmosphere and take readings as they go up. These measurements show the atmospheric warming, such as it is, is extremely slight and in conflict also with observations of the surface.

Q: An epic New Yorker series said unequivocally that the permafrost, the Arctic sea ice and



from other pens

• commentary

the Greenland glaciers are all melting. Is that true and is it because of global warming?

A: The Arctic temperatures have been measured for a long time. They vary cyclically. The warmest years in the Arctic were around 1940. Then it cooled. And it's warming again, but it hasn't reached the levels of 1940. It will continue to oscillate. That's the best prediction.

Q: What is the most dangerous untrue "fact" about global warming that's out there in the media-sphere?

A: The rise in sea level. The observations show sea level has risen in the last 18,000 years by about 400 feet and is continuing to rise at a uniform rate, and is not accelerating. In fact, sea level will continue to rise at a slow rate of 8 inches per century, as it has been for the last few thousand years.

Q: How did you become "the godfather of global warming denial"?

A: That's easy. Age. I organized my first conference on global warming in 1968. At that time I had no position. It was a conference called "The global effects of environmental pollution." At that time I remember some of the experts we had speaking thought the climate was going to warm and some thought it was going to cool. That was the situation.

Q: Climate is extremely complicated — is that a true statement?

A: Immensely complicated. Which is a reason why the models will never be able to adequately simulate the atmosphere. It's just too complicated.

Q: Give me a sample of how complicated just one little thing can be.

A: The most complicated thing about the

atmosphere that the models cannot capture is clouds. First of all, clouds are small. The resolution of the computer models is about 200 miles; clouds are much smaller than that. Secondly, they don't know when clouds form. They have to guess what humidity is necessary for a cloud to form. And of course, humidity is not the only factor. You have to have nuclei — little particles — on which the water vapor can condense to form droplets. They don't know that either. And they don't know at what point the cloud begins to rain out. And they don't know at what point — it goes on like this.

Q: Why is it important that global warming be studied in a balanced, scientific, depoliticized way?

A: It's a scientific problem. The climate is something we live with and we need to know what effect human activities are having on climate. I don't deny there's some affect of human activities on climate. Cities are warmer now than they used to be. We have changed forests into agricultural fields. We irrigate much of the Earth. That affects climate. And so on. We are having some influence on climate. So we need to know these things.

Q: And global warming is something we should study but not get panicky about?

A: The thing to keep in mind always is that the natural fluctuations of climate are very much larger than anything we can ascribe — so far — to any human activity. Much larger. We lived through a Little Ice Age just a few hundred years ago. During the Middle Ages the climate was much warmer than it is today. So the climate does change all the time. We need to understand the scientific reasons for natural climate change. Most of us now think it's the sun that is the real driver of climate. It has something to do with sun spots, but the mechanism is not quite clear.

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The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkanssas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkanssas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

Incorporating: The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

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