

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5005

As of February 13, 2009

Title: An act relating to naturally raised beef cattle.

Brief Description: Creating a program to certify and market certain cattle from Washington as either "natural beef cattle" or "natural grass-fed beef cattle."

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen and Swecker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 1/19/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: The beef cattle industry has experienced increased consumer demand for specialty products, including beef from cattle that have not been given antibiotics or hormones and cattle that have been raised on grass or other forage rather than grain or other feed. In response, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has adopted a voluntary standard for marketing of grass (forage) fed livestock, which prohibits grain feeding. Some states have adopted marketing standards for "natural" beef cattle that specify restrictions on feed and use of antibiotics and hormones. The Montana Department of Agriculture recently implemented a Montana Certified Natural Beef Program pursuant to state legislation enacted in 2007. That program certifies cattle as either "natural beef cattle," with restrictions concerning use of antibiotics, hormones, and other drugs and chemicals, or "natural grass-fed beef cattle," with the foregoing restrictions, and also requiring that cattle be raised and finished on grass.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) will administer a program to certify beef cattle from Washington as either natural beef cattle or natural grass-fed beef cattle.

To qualify as Washington-certified natural beef cattle, cattle must be born and raised in Washington and raised and finished without subtherapeutic antibiotics (i.e., not given in response to a disease outbreak), hormones, growth promotants, or ionophores (a chemical that can act as an antibiotic); and only on natural feed not containing drugs, chemicals, or

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animal byproducts. To qualify as Washington-certified natural grass-fed beef cattle, cattle must meet the foregoing requirements and also be raised and finished on grass.

WSDA must adopt certification standards and promote beef from certified cattle in its marketing programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.