

## Idaho beef growers eye potential changes in Japan

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BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A possible change in Japanese import policy concerning beef has the potential to create more income for Idaho beef producers, officials in Idaho said.

Since 2005, Japan has allowed into the country only beef from animals that were less than 20 months old when slaughtered to protect against bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or Mad Cow Disease. But in October a Japanese government subcommittee forwarded recommendations altering the restrictions to allow beef from cattle younger than 30 months old.

Jay Theiler, executive director of Boise-based Agri Beef Co., said the additional 10 months for growing beef would create more opportunities for selling high-quality cuts as well as the cuts that have greater value in Japan.

"What it does is a lot more cattle will qualify for export, because there is a lot less cattle that are available at that young of age," Theiler said.

Laura Johnson, market development division bureau chief for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, said the additional time will allow Idaho beef producers to produce quality beef for the Japan market.

"The Japanese consumer really likes a marbled, tender beef, and you don't have any time to fatten them up," she told the Idaho Business Review (<http://bit.ly/SzR6EU>).

Cevin Jones, chairman of the Idaho Beef Council, said if Japan does switch to a 30-month limit that could also allow more exports of beef undervalued in the U.S., such as cow tongues and livers that are considered high-quality meats in Japan.

"When you're able to export them to Japan, you have values that are 10 times the value to the U.S.," Jones said. "The Japanese love it. Tongues are worth dog food prices here, pennies a pound. And from what I've heard, they're going seven and a half dollars a pound in Japan."

Jones also noted that Idaho is in a good spot geographically for exporting to Japan because shipping from the Northwest is the easiest route.

Johnson said if Japan does make the change, Idaho beef producers will likely increase production.

"I think they are very well poised to ramp up and capitalize on this opening," she said.

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