

# The Great US Mad Cow Coverup Begins To Unravel

By John Stauber  
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The US government's elaborate cover-up of mad cow dangers in the United States has begun to unravel. Twenty-four hours after our successful protest with Organic Consumers Association of a US Department of Agriculture mad cow safety stunt in St. Paul, USDA Secretary Johanns was forced to admit that a cow tested last year and declared safe in fact DID have mad cow disease.

I've often charged that the USDA is hiding US cases of mad cow by using the wrong testing procedures and by failing to conduct food safety tests on millions of animals and this announcement proves it. USDA finally used the correct test - the Western Blot test - on this suspect animal and it has proven to be a case of mad cow disease.

Here at the Center for Media and Democracy we will continue to work hard on this issue until the US goes beyond lip-service and does what the EU countries and Japan have done: implement a science-based food-safety

testing program that tests millions of cattle a year. And, the US must put in place a REAL "fire-wall feed ban" that would stop the current feeding of billions of pounds of blood, meat, bone meal, animal fat and poultry feces to cattle in the US. These on-going feed practices amplify and spread mad cow disease.

The US news media has mostly failed to expose mad cow risks in the US. Instead, as with so many other issues, the corporate media has become an echo chamber for industry and government, confusing the public into thinking that the correct steps have been taken. The June 12 New York Times contains two relevant articles that I'll use to make my point.

The New York Times article on mad cow disease refers (without mentioning names of us and other critics) to ongoing condemnation of US policies, something that Sheldon Rampton and I began in 1997 with our prescient book *Mad Cow USA*. Our book correctly predicted that mad cow disease would appear here because rather than take the steps necessary to stop it, government and industry were (and are) merely misleading the media and the public with spin and deception. The New York Times could and should run a front page expose' revealing the gross failures of US animal feeding and testing policies and the ongoing risks they pose to both the US food and blood supply. But instead this New York Times article makes it sound like the USDA is behaving responsibly rather than engaging in an ongoing cover-up.

The second New York Times article looks at lobbyist Rick Berman's PR front groups. Rick Berman fuels his pro-industry activism with millions of dollars from the food, booze and tobacco industries]. His major websites are *Activist Cash* and *Consumer Freedom*. The New York Times used our *SourceWatch* website to research Berman and cites our exclusive report on his funding sources.

Berman's front group has smeared and attacked us for years, as in this December 2003 news release: "Reckless activists including John Stauber are already using the USDA's mad-cow disease announcement as a hook to create panic over America's food supply. Minutes after USDA Secretary Ann Veneman's Tuesday news conference, Stauber declared on CNN: 'My presumption is that mad cow disease is spread throughout North America ... There are more cases. No doubt about it.' "

At least Berman quoted me correctly. Typically his information is riddled with factual errors and out-of-context quotes but this time he got it right.

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