Let me start with a brief history of the problem. Brucellosis is a disease transmitted to cattle by other cattle or by infected wildlife. Brucellosis causes both cattle and wildlife to abort their fetus. In 1934, USDA APHIS began a program (as part of economic recovery) to eliminate brucellosis in the US. This involved a complicated system of class designation, testing, and slaughter. In December of 2000 the US finally achieved its eradication goal in the US cattle herds.

While brucellosis has come and gone in cattle there has always been a reservoir of the disease in the YNP wildlife. This reservoir has always posed a risk to cattle ranchers in the Greater Yellowstone Area.

In 2007, brucellosis was found in Bridger Montana. Due to APHIS brucellosis regulations, the entire herd of cattle was slaughtered. While the owners were compensated for these animals at the governmental rate, there was no way to replace the genetic loss, and the producer had to start over. In 2008, another positive case of brucellosis was found in Paradise Valley south of Livingston. This herd was also slaughtered. Because this was the second case within a 24 month period, Montana lost its Brucellosis class free status with APHIS, and the marketability of Montana cattle was impacted.

In response to these disease outbreaks, Montana State Vet and DOL created a Brucellosis Action Plan. This was necessary in order to meet APHIS standards to

and recovery of our class free status

regain our class free status. After the end date for the action plan, the state vet and DOL decided to issue an order that essentially drew a circle around YNP, thus impacting 4 counties and subjecting the ranchers with in those 4 counties to stringent testing requirements.

This order requires that ranchers blood test their entire herd every year, and Blood test cattle within 30 days of a change of ownership. Thus far, these testing costs have been paid by the DOL. The state vet set the testing costs at $12 per head for veterinarians that perform the tests. Any labor costs due to extra handling, wear and tear on equipment, fencing your hay stacks to be elk proof, brucellosis vaccination costs for your heifer calves, and mandatory identification of all your animals are paid by the rancher. ~~Montana Farm Bureau Federation created a~~ A survey was created for ranchers to estimate the costs associated with brucellosis and testing requirements. These costs vary widely depending on ranching operations. ~~plus~~ Ranching is not like other businesses where you pay a wage and what is left is profit. For most family ranches there is no wage paid. We deal with changes in fuel prices, fertilizer, seed, and hay costs. These costs rarely go down. Assume your ranch runs on a 5% margin, and testing costs are 1%, thereby the cost of testing for you is 20% of that 5% margin. Or use the example of a 100 % calf crop—which hardly ever happens---it costs ~~you~~ the rancher $7 per head to test, if your calf is worth $700 dollars, the test has just cost you 1% of your earnings on that calf. All

these additional costs have been a lot to bear over the last several years. Yet ranchers have tolerated the extra expenses because we all thought they would be short term costs.

At the present time USDA APHIS is operating under a proposed interim rule. APHIS no longer practices mandatory depopulation or whole herd slaughter. A state can maintain its coveted class free status even if it has ongoing cases of brucellosis. There is potential for this rule to have less stringent requirements for cattle within these areas with diseased wildlife. However, rather than being more reasonable in their response to brucellosis, Montana continues with its strict requirements, and is trying to turn the original order into an administrative rule, which would be permanent. Thereby placing testing, vaccination, and identification costs on ranchers in perpetuity and even assessing fines of $100 per head for not complying with all aspects of the rule.

Today, we are here to request from the legislature

-That the DSA orders be kept orders and not be turned into administrative rules.

-The DSAs have sunset dates and not be permanent. Montana has always had procedures in place to find the disease if it were to appear in cattle again.

-That the legislature support DOL budget items that relate to testing requirements for livestock.

-That the legislature adopts policies that address diseased wildlife

And finally · We ask that the legislature adopt bills ~~LC 1861 and LC 1863.~~ upcoming that help ~~us~~ ranchers address these issues

Ranchers in the DSA understand that brucellosis is a serious disease threat. However, in the last two and a half years of testing statewide we have bled over 250,000 cattle and not found one diseased animal. Ranchers are doing their part with vaccination, identification, plus keeping wildlife away from our cattle. We just ask that Montana not adopt unnecessarily strict and expensive requirements at a time when the Federal government is changing their program. The family owned ranching industry representing generations of agriculture are being crushed by the endless requirements in these 4 Montana counties. In the end jobs will be lost, open space will be lost, and the rural culture of our agricultural communities will be irrevocably changed.