



*The University of Georgia*

*Cooperative Extension Service*

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## ***BROILER TIP . . .***

### **FDA PROPOSES LITTER FEEDING BAN**

In a January 26, 2004, press release, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced several new public health measures to be implemented to strengthen the existing "firewalls" that protect consumers from the agent believed to cause "Mad Cow Disease" or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and to help prevent the spread of BSE in U.S. cattle herds. The FDA stated that the new safeguards are science-based and intended to further bolster existing prevention efforts and to strengthen FDA's 1997 animal feed rule.

A component of the new safeguards that strengthen the animal feed rule is a proposed ban on the use of poultry litter as a feed for ruminants. Broiler litter, used by many cattle producers over the past 4-5 decades as a low-cost protein feed source, is to be banned from use in ruminant feeding programs. It is still legal for poultry feeds to contain protein sources such as meat and bone meal. However, these ingredients are prohibited in ruminant feed. FDA is concerned that spilled poultry feed as a component of poultry litter will be collected and fed to ruminants, posing a potential risk of BSE infection. Prior to this announcement, no federal laws or regulations have controlled the sale or use of poultry litter as a ruminant feed ingredient.

Broiler litter has been a good feed source for cattle during the winter or times of drought, particularly for brood cows and stocker cattle. Benefits of its use as a cattle feed have included: 1) environmental protection via responsible use of an animal by-product, 2) increased sale value of the by-product for poultry producers, and 3) economic benefit for production of beef cattle as a low-cost feed source. Despite these benefits, the feeding of poultry litter, however, is not a widespread practice. It is estimated that less than 1% of the total amount of poultry litter generated in the United States is fed to cattle.

While the chances of ruminants becoming BSE-positive from the consumption of poultry litter is highly unlikely, many in the industry have anticipated this ban for quite some time. Public misconceptions concerning the feeding of poultry litter coupled with heightened anxiety over BSE

#### **PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK**

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.  
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has now compelled FDA to enact this rule, despite over 40 years of use without any evidence of diminished safety of beef products or harmful effects in humans.

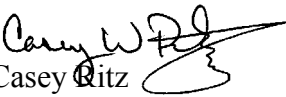
Since high quality poultry litter is usually much more valuable as a feed than fertilizer, the loss of this practice will affect the nutrient management planning efforts and cattle feeding programs of many farmers nationwide.

#### References

FDA Press Release, January 26, 2004. Expanded "Mad Cow" Safeguards Announced to Strengthen Existing Firewalls Against BSE Transmission.

Davis, G.V. Jr., 1999. Feeding Broiler Litter to Beef Cattle. University of Arkansas CES publication.

Starkey, J., 2002. CAFO Revisions: Regulation without Purpose? Watt Poultry/USA, January issue.

  
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**\*\*Consult with your poultry company representative before making management changes.\*\***

“Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject”