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## **Japan confirms 8th case of mad cow, Canadian officials en route to Asia**

BY JUDY MONCHUK

CALGARY (CP) - Japan's discovery of mad cow disease in a 23-month-old bull could make negotiations to get Canadian beef back into the Asian country more complex, says an export official.

"Has it made our future negotiations with Japan more difficult? Yes," said Ted Haney of the Canada Beef Export Federation.

"But you have to balance that (with the fact) Japan has not been able to demonstrate that it is minimal risk for BSE. Its control programs were introduced years later than Canada's."

An expert in Japanese-Canadian relations says the detection of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the formal name for mad cow, bolsters Japan's contention that all cattle bound for human consumption must be tested for the brain-wasting disease.

"If you do not have a good surveillance and monitoring system, BSE cases will slip through and that's exactly the argument they've been making," said Wenran Jiang, who teaches at the University of Alberta.

"This is a country that has a collapsed industry (and) invested billions of dollars into it in order to recover," Jiang said from Edmonton. "They have one of the best BSE-detection systems on earth. They simply do not believe (Canada's) story that we are telling a domestic audience that we have the best science. We don't. The Japanese do."

Japanese health officials confirmed Monday the country's eighth case of mad cow disease. Earlier infected cattle, the first of which was diagnosed in September 2001, were five years old.

Japan has not been able to determine how the young bull contracted the disease. Experts have said they believed animals under 30 months could not develop mad cow, although there have been some rare exceptions.

Japan is one of more than 30 countries that closed borders to Canadian beef in May after BSE was discovered in a lone Alberta breeder cow. Japan's call for all cattle to be tested has been perceived as excessive by many Canadian politicians and producers.

In 2002, Canada tested about 3,300 animals for mad cow disease. But Dr. Brian Evans, the country's chief veterinarian, has said that may have to be increased by as much as 25 times in order to calm fears of trading partners.

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Consumer confidence in Japanese beef plummeted because there were major coverups around its mad cow crisis in 2001. The deputy agriculture minister resigned after it was revealed Japan's first diseased cow had been ground into bone meal despite the government's initial statement that the animal had stayed out of the food chain.

"This is further reason to buy beef from countries like Canada where we haven't seen anything since May," said Andre Lemay of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

"We don't really know whether it will make things more difficult. I suspect that it will, but we'll have to see."

Federal government officials, including Evans of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, left Sunday on a mission to try to convince China, Hong Kong and Taiwan to reopen their borders to Canadian beef. The delegation is to return Oct. 16.

Japan was feeding ruminant meat and bone imported from Europe to other ruminants as late as 2001, while Canada banned the product in the 1980s.

In the latest case, the animal tested positive Sept. 29 when it was brought to a slaughterhouse north of Tokyo. Those findings were backed by follow-up tests by the National Institute of Infectious Diseases, said Health Ministry official Makoto Kanie.

Although Japan imports only a tiny amount of Canadian beef each year, it has insisted it will not accept American imports unless the United States can guarantee its beef had no contact with Canadian cattle. Since the Canadian and U.S. market is highly integrated, Japan's stand has been a major stumbling block in getting borders reopened.

The mad cow crisis has cost exporters more than \$1 billion so far, with much of the economic pain felt in Alberta, the heart of the country's cattle industry.

Last month, the international agency that sets animal health standards agreed to act as a mediator in beef import discussions between Canada and other countries to show whether standards are being met. The Paris-based Organisation Internationale des Epizooties said this could help open more international borders to Canadian beef.