

North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Testimony to the Senate Human Services Committee on SB 2384
Feb. 7, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. My name is Julie Ellingson and I represent the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, a 93-year-old beef cattle trade organization comprised of more than 3,150 cattle-ranching members.

As you just heard, SB 2384 has implications for both human and animal health. It is important to note that the NDSA has no position on the human provisions of this bill, as that is not our focus nor our policy. We do, however, have a position on the animal element of this bill and appear here in opposition to it, as it would limit the use and administration of what could become a powerful platform for disease control in our livestock herds.

While there are no currently licensed mRNA vaccines for use in livestock in the United States, the technology has been around for decades and is not experimental. In fact, research on mRNA vaccines in livestock has been going on for decades, which indicates that there will, at some point be mRNA vaccines for cattle, once there has been sufficient research and significant layers of government review and approval.

And that's exciting and important news, because research in this area is being explored to address some of the world's greatest livestock disease challenges, including foot-and-mouth disease, a severe and highly contagious viral disease impacting cloven hooved animals. Characterized by ulcers in the oral cavity, fever, lameness and sores and blisters on the feet, it is estimated that an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the United States would cost from \$2 to \$200 billion, depending on the disease's mode and extent. Because it is so contagious, it can spread quickly and cause significant economic losses and would immediately shut down our international markets. Fortifying our nation's foot-and-mouth disease preparedness was our industry's no. 1 priority in the last farm bill and is again in the upcoming one.

At the pace they are on, mRNA vaccines are very likely to be a part of the next pandemic response in animals and, likewise, a part of endemic disease response.

SB 2384 would eliminate this possibly very effective tool from the livestock industry's animal health arsenal, which could have grave animal health and well-being and economic ramifications for the cattle producers of our state. For these reasons, we oppose the animal provisions of SB 2384 and ask for your do-not-pass recommendation on at least that portion of the bill.