



Charles Wilson,
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Dear Mr Wilson,

I write to you in my position as Interim CEO of the National Beef Association. We are concerned about some of the procedures and processes we have discovered at some Booker outlets in recent weeks, and hope you may be able to clarify these for us.

In the first picture below, you can see the original source label for imported Uruguayan beef has been intentionally over-labelled with one from your own corporation. This obliterates the majority of the original information, including the original best before date, allowing only the animal slaughter date to be visible to potential customers. Whilst we acknowledge and agree that labelling laws in the UK under the current EU legislative banner are vague to say the least, we understand that labelling over the original label is against the law. This therefore appears to be a breach of both Trading Standards and Environmental Health law.

Also covered are the details with regard to freezing and shelf life of the product. If this beef was to appear back on your shelves for sale as an unfrozen product, can you confirm that your labelling system would acknowledge and inform that the product was not for refreezing? Our understanding is that good practice laws on frozen beef suggest that it can be frozen for a period of up to six months, but certainly no more than 12 months. Your best before date of July 2021 from an animal slaughtered in November 2019 covers 20 months – a period way in excess of accepted norms. In the second attached photograph, taken earlier this year, of imported Australian beef, the best before date is a much more acceptable five months – why the difference?

The NBA accepts that the UK needs to import a certain proportion of its beef – at between 70 and 80% self-sufficiency we don't produce enough of our own - but we do believe in transparency of labelling to allow the customer to make an informed choice. One of our current campaigns aims to highlight where our beef comes from, and we encourage consumers to ask suppliers - both in retail and in hospitality outlets - where their beef originates from. Accurate and honest labelling is not only the law, it is part of being a responsible retailer, and ensures that your customers can trust your branding.

We have an active social media presence, and we will be posting this story and the accompanying photographs on both Facebook and Twitter in the coming weeks. However, we believe in listening to both sides of the story, and will not do this before we have given you suitable time to respond. Should you choose to respond, we will of course add your response to the post.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Shand
Interim CEO, National Beef Association.



National Beef Association

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