

Official Says U.S. Meat Imports Might Resume

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 11, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

Russia will lift the ban on meat imports from the United States, which came into effect Monday, if the country ensures supplies from factories that don't use the feed additive ractopamine, chief sanitary inspector Gennady Onishchenko said.

However, Onishchenko said the ban is unlikely to be lifted in the near future.

"Restrictions will remain in force until a solution is found. They will either agree with us and begin deliveries without this stimulant or collect the proofs and go to court," he told Interfax on Monday.

Russia has test results proving that using ractopamine is unsafe for humans, but the U.S. should conduct research of its own, he added.

Onishchenko said the U.S. didn't supply meat containing ractopamine to Europe.

Russia banned imports of almost all sorts of meat from the U.S., including frozen pork, beef, turkey and byproducts, due to concerns over the drug, which is used as a feed additive for animal breeding to boost meat gains.

Earlier this month, Russia also banned supplies of cooled meat from the U.S.

The only meat exempt from the restrictions is chicken.

Ractopamine use is banned in 160 countries, although its possible impact on human health has yet to be studied.

The additive is also used in Canada, Mexico and Brazil, according to the Federal Consumer Protection Service. But these countries were allowed to continue supplies after they agreed to meet Russia's requirement to provide supporting documents with every delivery to confirm that the meat does not contain ractopamine.

The ban on meat imports, worth over \$500 million each year, is expected to help domestic producers withstand an influx of cheap meat after Russia joined the World Trade Organization.

Western food producers believe protectionism, rather than concern about additives, is its primary purpose.

The influx has driven down pork prices in particular and threatens hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in modern pig farms to supply Russian consumers, who are eating more meat as oil-felled government spending drives up incomes.

"Import is being restrained by the actions of the Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service, and that is a stimulating factor for domestic production," Vladimir Labinov, the head of the livestock department of the Agriculture Ministry, said this week.

The United States made its opposition clear.

"These actions threaten to undermine our bilateral trade relationship," Andrea Mead, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Trade Representative's office, said last week. "They are not consistent with international standards and appear to be inconsistent with Russia's WTO commitments."

The federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service said U.S. producers had ample time to comply after warnings were issued early last year, well before Russia joined the WTO, over use of ractopamine, a growth stimulant used to produce leaner meat.

Brazilian and Canadian producers have promised to comply.

✉(MT, Reuters)

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