



# BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY UPDATE

AUGUST 2005

## United States BSE Surveillance

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) enhanced Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) surveillance in June 2004 after diagnosing BSE in a Canadian-origin cow in Washington State in December 2003. As many samples as possible are being collected over a 12-18 month period from "high-risk" cattle over thirty months of age. The plan is to find out if U.S. cattle have BSE, and if so, at what level. A "cost-recovery" system for the movement, storage and disposal of carcasses or products is in place to aid the cattle industry during this surveillance program.

Since June 2004, over 412,359 samples have been collected from U.S. cattle; only one sample confirmed a case of BSE. Approximately 50,000 of these samples were collected in California.

## BSE in the United States

On June 24, 2005, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Johanns, announced that The Veterinary Laboratories Agency in Weybridge, England, confirmed that a cow slaughtered in November 2004 was infected with BSE. The cow was sampled for BSE at a pet food facility in Texas. DNA tests confirmed that the approximately 12-year-old Brahma-cross cow was born and raised in a herd in Texas. The herd was quarantined and cattle that were in a similar birth group as the infected animal and/or ate the same feed were identified and removed from the herd. The infected cow's last two calves are also being traced.

Sixty-seven cattle were removed from the herd and tested negative for BSE. The herd testing has been completed and the quarantine released. The source of infection is still under investigation.

## BSE in Canada

In January 2005, BSE was confirmed in an eight-year-old dairy cow and in a seven-year-old beef cow. Both were born in Alberta, Canada. No part of these animals entered human food or animal feed. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency suspects these animals were infected through contaminated feed produced before or shortly after the 1997 feed ban. The investigations focused on tracing the infected cows, their offspring, and other cattle born on the same farms within a year of the infected animals.

The four cases of BSE diagnosed in Canadian-born cattle since May 2003 have cost the industry an estimated five billion dollars. These recent cases have also raised concerns about the proposed reopening of the Canadian border.

## Minimal-Risk Regions

The USDA published a final rule classifying regions as "minimal risk for introducing BSE into the U.S." on January 4, 2005. The rule aims to continue to protect the U.S. from BSE while removing unnecessary restrictions on trade in ruminants, their products and byproducts. This rule recognizes Canada as the first country to be classified as a minimal-risk region after diagnosing BSE.

Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United, Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF) petitioned the U.S. District Court of Montana to prohibit this rule, and sought an injunction against the rule. On March 3, 2005, the district court ruled for a preliminary injunction barring the implementation of the regulation. On July 14, 2005, the Ninth District Court of Appeals lifted this injunction. The original suit may be heard in the Montana court after the appeals court provides further instruction.

As of July 14, 2005, the following commodities can be imported from Canada:

- Cattle for immediate slaughter or feeding (must be less than 30 months old when slaughtered). Feeder cattle must be branded to show their origin ("C/N" will be used for Canada), individually identified with an ear tag tracing to their farm of origin, moved to feedlots in "sealed" vehicles, and must not go to more than one feedlot. Specified risk materials must be removed at slaughter.
- Meat from cattle, and certain other products and byproducts, including bovine livers, tongues, gelatin, and tallow.

Other regions that meet the minimal-risk conditions in the future will be classified through rulemaking and a risk assessment.

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