

January 2, 2005

**MEDIA LINES**  
*BSE Positive Confirmation*

**Issue**

Testing has definitively confirmed the presence of BSE in an eight-year-old dairy cow from Alberta.

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- Testing has definitively confirmed BSE in an 8-year-old dairy cow from Alberta.
- While earlier information suggested the suspect animal might be ten years old, it has now been confirmed that the cow was eight years old.
- The results were obtained using the internationally recognized “gold standard” test for BSE. The testing was done at the Canadian Science Centre for Human and Animal Health in Winnipeg.

**Food Safety**

- This finding does not pose an increased risk to food safety. Canada’s public health measures have been built on the assumption that a low, declining level of BSE remains a possibility in North America.
- Canada requires the removal of specified risk material from all animals entering the human food supply. SRM are tissues that, in infected cattle, contain the BSE agent.
- This measure is internationally recognized as the most effective means to protect public health from BSE.
- No part of the animal entered the human food or animal feed systems.

**Investigation**

- The CFIA has already identified the animal’s farm of origin, and work is well underway to trace any other animals of equivalent risk. Specifically, the CFIA is focusing on recently born offspring and cattle born on the farm of origin within a year of the infected animal.

- A quarantine has been placed on animals on the farm of origin. As the investigation continues, additional quarantines may be necessary.
- The CFIA is also investigating feeding practices and purchases. Given the age of the animal, it may not be possible to definitively identify a particular feed source as the origin of infection.
- As was done during previous BSE investigations, the CFIA will keep Canadians informed of the latest information with regular updates.
- Information regarding the farm of origin and ownership of the animal cannot be released due to privacy laws.

#### **Disposal**

- The carcass is being sent to a federal laboratory for future research.

#### **Additional cases**

- Additional cases may be detected as the investigation unfolds and as surveillance testing continues.
- Since BSE was first confirmed in Canada in May 2003, CFIA investigations and assessments have indicated that a low, declining level of BSE is likely present in North America.

#### **Surveillance**

- This animal was identified through the national surveillance program. To date, the program has tested more than 22,000 cattle this year, well beyond the testing target of 8,000 samples.
- As the amount of testing increases to a minimum of 30,000 samples per year, the CFIA will be able to test at a level that would identify one positive animal in a million. This level of sensitivity is equal to that of the U.S.'s surveillance program.

#### **Origin of infection**

- Similar to the two North American BSE-infected animals detected in 2003, this animal was born before the Canadian and American feed bans were introduced in 1997.
- Consumption of contaminated feed before 1997 remains the most

likely route of transmission. Evidence collected through investigations and risk analyses continues to indicate that the feed ban has successfully limited BSE spread since being implemented.

**Implications – Export Markets**

- Canada has been asking trading partners to re-open borders to a maximum range of products and live animals based on World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) standards. Specifically, trading partners have been asked to resume trade in beef from which specified risk material has been removed and live cattle born after the implementation of Canada's 1997 feed ban.
- Trade negotiations have taken into account the probability of very low level of BSE in Canada and the range of risk mitigation measures currently in place. As a result, this current finding is not expected to have any bearing on market access.

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