

JUST THE FACTS

Kentucky Cattlemen Present the Facts about BSE

Lexington, Ky. . . The Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association (KCA) fully supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) effort to ensure that the suspected BSE case diagnosed yesterday in a dairy cow in Washington State is being handled swiftly and aggressively. The U.S. cattle industry remains committed to eliminating this disease from North America and has the strictest animal disease control systems in the world in place.

The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) is working closely with the USDA to carry out a full investigation and determine additional preventive measures, if any, that need to be taken to continue to protect animal and public health. “We have the most aggressive policies in the world when it comes to protecting our agricultural interests,” said Dave Maples, vice president of the KCA.

Americans consumers can continue to eat beef with confidence. All scientific studies show that the BSE infectious agent has never been found in beef muscle or milk and U.S. beef remains safe to eat for a number of reasons:

- BSE is not known to spread from animal to animal according to the latest science. The most critical animal health control measure – a ruminant feed ban – has been in place since 1997. We have systems in place to quickly contain this disease and eliminate it.
- The United States has not imported any beef from the United Kingdom (UK) since 1985. Import of ruminant animals and ruminant products from the UK and other countries with bovine spongiform encephalopathies i.e., BSE, was banned in 1989 and import of live ruminant animals and animal products from all European countries was banned, as stated above, in 1997.
- This is an animal health issue; current science indicates that BSE is not found in meat like steaks and roasts. It is found in central nervous system tissue such as brain and spinal cord.
- This case was found in a federally inspected plant. The central nervous tissue from this animal, which scientists recognize as infective material, did not go into the food supply.

- All U.S. cattle are inspected by a USDA inspector or veterinarian before going to slaughter. Animals with any signs of neurological disorder are tested for BSE.
- BSE affects older cattle, typically over 30 months of age. The vast majority of the cattle going to market in the U.S. are less than 24 months old.
- The U.S. began a surveillance program for BSE in 1990 and was the first country without the disease within its borders to test cattle for the disease. The surveillance system targets all cattle with any signs of neurological disorder as well as those over 30 months of age and animals that are non-ambulatory.
- The U.S. banned imports of cattle and bovine products from countries with BSE beginning in 1989.
- The only way BSE spreads is through contaminated feed. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration in 1997 instituted a ban on feeding ruminant-derived meat and bone meal supplements to cattle. This is a firewall that prevents the spread of BSE to other animals if it were present in the U.S.

Currently this is a suspected case in one animal and the USDA is aggressively investigating this case. We want to reiterate that we support a full investigation and the necessary steps to eliminate this disease from North America and protect the health of U.S. cattle. For additional information go to www.BSEinfo.org or you can access the USDA's hotline at 1-866-873-2266.

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