

ATTACHMENT 13

BSE IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
 An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Forbartha Tuaithe
 Government of Ireland



BSE in Ireland - Information Note.

1. Incidence of BSE in Ireland.

The first case of BSE was diagnosed on 25 January, 1989. Since then a total of 474 cases have been diagnosed as follows :

Year	No. of Brains examined	No. of Cases positive	Incidence as % of of total cattle population
1989	25	15	0.000224
1990	46	14	0.0002029
1991	32	17	0.0002485
1992	30	18	0.0002541
1993	40	16	0.0002268
1994	36	19	0.0002662
1995	35	16	0.000223
1996	133	73	0.0009848
1997	149	77	0.001002
1998	174	79	0.000989
1999	191	91	0.001202
2000 (to date)	80	34	
Totals	971	474	

a) In 1996 a total of 3,230 brains from cattle in depopulated herds and cohort animals were examined.

One additional positive cohort animal was detected giving a total of 74 animals in which BSE pathology was detected.

b) In 1997 a total of 5,043 brains from cattle in depopulated herds and cohort animals were examined. Three additional positive cohort animals were detected giving a total of 80 animals in which BSE pathology was detected.

c) In 1998 a total of 2,557 brains from cattle in depopulated herds and cohort animals have been examined. Four additional positive cohort animals have been detected.

d) In 1999 a total of 3,260 brains from cattle in depopulated herds and cohort animals have been examined. Four additional positive cohort animals have been detected.

e) In 2000 (to date) a total of 73 brains from cattle in depopulated herds and cohort animals have been

examined. No additional positive cohort animals have been detected.

Fifteen of the total were imported animals. The total number of positive cases represents 48.82% of the brains of suspect animals slaughtered and examined for BSE.

The total number of cattle in Ireland is 7,569,735 which are contained in 138,163 herds. Beef production is grass based, with cattle grazing pasture for most of the year. When housed during Winter months they are fed primarily on silage and/or hay. A total of 1.5m cattle are slaughtered each year, with nine out of every ten carcasses destined for export.

2. Disease Surveillance

The following surveillance and general control measures are in place:

- BSE was declared a Class A Disease under the Diseases of Animals Act, 1966, so as to benefit from the powers of compulsion in relation to restriction, control and slaughter provided for by that Act.
- BSE is compulsorily notifiable under the Diseases of Animals Act, 1966. This places a statutory obligation on veterinary surgeons, farmers and all other persons in charge of bovine animals to notify the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of any such animal suspected of being affected by BSE.
- The feeding of meat and bone meal to ruminant animals, either directly or through feedingstuffs, has been banned since 1990.
- Importation of cattle and bovine products from the U.K. is prohibited in accordance with EU legislation.
- Animals imported from the U.K. prior to the prohibition are being traced, purchased at full market value, slaughtered, rendered and then excluded from the human food and animal feed chains.
- Veterinary surgeons and farmers have been alerted to the symptoms of the disease. A special information campaign was organised for veterinary practitioners, with the use of video material.
- All suspect animals are visited by both a veterinary inspector from the local District Veterinary Office, and a veterinary research officer from the Veterinary Research Laboratory.
- In abattoirs animals are examined ante-mortem for signs of diseases including BSE by an official veterinarian.

3. Control Measures.

The following control measures apply where animals are either suspected of being affected by, or have been confirmed as cases of, BSE:

- As stated, suspect animals are visited by both a veterinary inspector from the local District Veterinary Office, and a veterinary research officer from the Veterinary Research Laboratory. The herd in question is immediately placed under official restriction and quarantined.
- An inventory of the herd and an initial epidemiological investigation is carried out. The course of the disease is monitored for a short while, following which, where BSE is not ruled out, suspects are slaughtered and the brains taken to the central Veterinary Research Laboratory for examination using both standard histology and immunocytochemistry.
- The slaughtered BSE suspect animals are destroyed and buried in situ. Full market value is paid to the farmer by the State in compensation.
- If BSE is confirmed, the entire herds are depopulated and compensation for all the animals is paid to the farmer by the State at the full market value of the animals. The slaughter of the animals being depopulated and destroyed is carried out in a special non-export meat factory. The carcasses are then rendered into meat and bone meal at one specific rendering plant. The collection, transport, slaughter and destruction of the animals takes place under the direct

control of the District Veterinary Office. The meat and bone meal and the tallow are excluded from the human food and animal feed chains, and are stored in secured premises supervised by the Department pending incineration.

- Brain sections of all the adult animals in the herds being depopulated are extracted from the animals being slaughtered and sent to the laboratory for testing for BSE. The brains are examined by histopathology and immunocyto chemistry.
- A full epidemiological examination of the BSE case takes place, including an examination of farm records and a search of the farm to determine if any evidence of potential exposure to meat and bonemeal can be found.
- The affected farm is disinfected with an approved disinfectant (20,000 PPM of available Chlorine) and left vacant for more than 30 days.
- In all cases the progeny of the affected animal and the birth cohorts of the affected animal are traced, purchased at market value, slaughtered, destroyed and rendered in the same manner as depopulated herds.

4. Exclusion of Specified Risk Material from human food and animal feed chains.

The following portions of animals are designated as Specified Risk Material and are excluded from the human food and animal feed chains :

- the skull, brain, eyes, tonsils and spinal cord of cattle over 12 months and of sheep (and goats) with one permanent incisor tooth (i.e. also over 12 months)
- the spleen of sheep and goats.

These materials are isolated on slaughter of the animals, permanently stained and removed directly to a specially dedicated rendering plant, where they are rendered and the resultant meat and bonemeal and tallow are stored pending destruction by incineration.

5. Control of meat and bonemeal

The use of mammalian (cattle, sheep and pigs) meat and bonemeal is strictly controlled (so as to eliminate the possibility of cross-contamination of ruminant animal feed) by the following measures :

- manufacturers of mammalian meat and bonemeal must be licensed and maintain records of purchasers
- purchasers must also be licensed
- manufacturers of feedingstuffs for non-ruminant animals or poultry in which mammalian meat and bonemeal is incorporated must be licensed and shall not have such meat and bonemeal in their possession or under their control without a licence
- persons keeping ruminant animals on their lands and premises shall not have mammalian meat and bonemeal or feedingstuff containing such meat and bonemeal in their possession or under their control without a licence
- persons who store or transport mammalian meat and bonemeal or feedingstuff containing such meat and bonemeal shall take all necessary precautions to ensure that it does not contaminate any other product
- any feedingstuff containing mammalian meat and bonemeal being sold or supplied must bear the words :
“
This product contains mammalian meat and bonemeal; it is illegal to feed to cattle, sheep, goats or deer”
- manufacturers of feedingstuffs in which poultry offal is incorporated must also be licensed
- only mammalian meat and bonemeal in packages of less than 5kgs and not intended for feeding to animals or poultry, which bear the words :
“

Not for feeding to cattle, deer, goats or sheep”

may be sold or purchased without a licence.

6. Manufacture of meat and bonemeal

There are 9 rendering plants in the State which manufacture meat and bonemeal; they are approved in accordance with E.U. Council Directive 90/677/EEC and validated in accordance with E.U. Commission Decision 94/382/EC. All are supervised by full-time staff of the Department of Agriculture and Food. From 1 April, 1997 E.U. standard that material must be rendered at 133°C under pressure of 3 Bar for 20 minutes is applied to all plants.

7. Feedingstuff Industry

All mills involved in the manufacture of animal feedingstuffs are under the supervision of full time Agricultural Inspectors of the Department of Agriculture and Food. Regular inspections are carried out and the feed is monitored using the microscopic test for bone fragments. Mills which manufacture ruminant feed are not permitted to use meat and bonemeal in other rations produced in the same mill in order to eliminate any possibility of cross contamination.

8. Irish Beef.

Policy in regard to the Irish beef sector is designed to ensure a high standard of public and animal health and to provide the strongest possible guarantees to customers and consumers. A comprehensive series of controls is in place in relation to BSE. These controls, detailed above, go beyond what is recommended by scientific evidence or recommended by international organisations. All beef comes from animals that are slaughtered in approved premises which are subject to official veterinary supervision.

9. Ireland's animal health position.

Ireland has a high animal health status and its agricultural products have access to the most discerning markets world-wide. Irish beef is recognised as a good product, produced in a clean environment under good conditions and in accordance with good standards of husbandry. Ireland's cattle production is predominantly grass based and is based on a largely self contained national herd.

Having regard to the fact that BSE is generally regarded to have been caused by the recycling through meat and bonemeal of infected sheep and cattle tissue feed, it should be noted that there is an extremely low incidence of sheep scrapie (which is also a notifiable disease) in Ireland. The ratio between its sheep and cattle population (approximately 1:1) also reduces the risk factor to BSE.

Ireland is classified by the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) as having a low sporadic incidence of BSE for the purpose of the international trade code adopted by that organisation. The low level of the disease in the country has also been recognised by the European Union which has not included Ireland in the scope of the control measures in respect of BSE adopted following the recommendations of the Scientific Veterinary Committee.

Animal Health Division
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