

ANALYSIS OF RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BSE IN ARGENTINA

Communication from Argentina

The following communication, received on 12 August 2010, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Argentina.

ANALYSIS OF RISK FACTORS LINKED TO BSE IN ARGENTINA

1. Argentina wishes to inform Members that the "Analysis of Risk Factors Associated with BSE in Argentina" is now available for consultation. The document in question was prepared jointly by experts from the National Agriculture and Food Quality and Health Service (SENASA), the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA), the Foundation for Action against Childhood Neurological Diseases (FLENI)¹ and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), under the coordination of the IICA.
2. Pursuant to the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, the BSE risk status of a country's cattle population should be determined on the basis of the outcome of a risk assessment identifying all potential factors for BSE occurrence and their historic perspective. The Terrestrial Code also provides that the risk assessment should be reviewed annually to determine whether the situation has changed.
3. In accordance with the OIE provisions, Argentina keeps its BSE risk assessment up to date in order to uphold and maintain its OIE-recognized negligible BSE risk status.
4. The document made public by Argentina comprises a review for the period 2006-2008. It is currently available only in Spanish, although an English version is soon to follow.
5. The Analysis of Risk Factors Associated with BSE in Argentina has been updated in accordance with Terrestrial Code guidelines pertaining to the assessment of the risk of release and exposure, and other Terrestrial Code requirements, such as the existence of an epidemiological surveillance system and an awareness programme.
6. Hence, the document describes the components of the Programme for the Prevention and Surveillance of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs), launched in 1990, and the main activities conducted within this framework.

¹ FLENI is a public welfare institution specializing in neurological disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment and research. For further information go to <http://www.fleni.org.ar>.

7. The conclusions drawn include the following:
- (a) The risk posed by imported animals is negligible or non-existent given the extremely low number of animals imported over the last seven years from countries with BSE cases or at risk of BSE, and the follow-up, monitoring and end use given to these imported animals;
 - (b) the climate and geographical extent of Argentina make it possible to rear large populations of cattle and sheep on pasture alone, given its year-round availability;
 - (c) the geographical separation between the country's cattle and sheep populations significantly reduces the risk of the infection being transmitted directly from one species to the other;
 - (d) virtually all cattle are slaughtered in officially controlled meat-packing plants and are subject to official ante-mortem inspection;
 - (e) each year, a large number of cows are slaughtered at an age where the BSE virus would be detected if it were present in Argentina;
 - (f) for economic reasons, the rendering process constitutes only one part of the slaughterhouse waste disposal system. The total volume of meat and bone meal produced in Argentina is considerably lower than in other countries with smaller cattle populations;
 - (g) the practice of adding ruminant-derived proteins to ruminant feed has been banned since 1995; feeding ruminants with proteins derived from mammals has been banned since 2002; feeding ruminants with animal proteins has been banned since 2004;
 - (h) an official system for monitoring compliance with the animal feed ban has existed for more than seven years and serves to ensure that the ban is effectively enforced; and
 - (i) Argentina meets the conditions for negligible risk of BSE under the Terrestrial Code and is recognized by the OIE as having that status.
8. The full report is available on request from SENASA:

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