

**ACTION BY MEXICO REGARDING THE IMPORTATION OF LIVESTOCK
GOODS REPRESENTING A ZOOSANITARY RISK**

Communication from Mexico

1. Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is a progressive neurological disorder of cattle caused by infection with a non-conventional transmissible agent (prion); the risk factors can be mitigated, for example, by primary dissemination through the use of ruminant feed containing proteins and other products of ruminant origin infected by the prion. In Mexico, BSE is considered an exotic disease, for which reason preventive measures need to be maintained and strengthened to avoid it being introduced into Mexico and spreading throughout the country.

2. On 23 December 2003, the secretariat of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that an adult Holstein cow in the State of Washington was suspected of having BSE, and this was confirmed on 25 December 2003 by the reference laboratory in Weybridge, United Kingdom.

Action to prevent entry of products representing a risk to livestock health

3. In response to the first native case of BSE in the United States of America, and in view of the health regulations issued by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Government of Mexico, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA), has decided to apply such measures to mitigate the risk of introducing BSE into Mexico as a ban on tourist and commercial imports of live bovines, meat, viscera, offal, meat preparations, products from non-deproteinized tallow, gelatine and collagen prepared from bones, as well as ruminant-derived meal. Milk and milk products, semen, embryos, protein-free tallow, dicalcium phosphate, hides and skins, gelatines and collagen obtained from hides and skins are exempt from this prohibition. On 23 December 2003, the SAGARPA Directorate-General of Animal Health (DGSA) notified the Directorate-General of Phytozoosanitary Inspection (DGIF) of the list of animals and products of animal origin that are prohibited from entering Mexico. On the same date, the USDA was informed of these precautionary measures.

4. On 6 January 2004 the United States and the Mexican authorities held a meeting at which SAGARPA asked the USDA for additional information on the timeframe for implementation of the risk mitigation procedures and measures. In addition, to assess *in situ* the additional measures and action taken by the United States to strengthen its systems for BSE and better public health protection, three SAGARPA officials visited the United States from 12 to 16 January 2004 and were able to see the surveillance measures applied and the initiatives that will be taken by the USDA with regard to BSE.

5. The DGIF was notified on 14 January 2004 of the zoosanitary requirements for imports of balanced cat and/or dog food and the prohibition on imports of vaccinations and bacteria for exclusive use in ruminants.

6. On the basis of these communiqués the DGIF informed the General Customs Administration of the Tax Administration Service (SAT) of the cancellation of imports of the above-mentioned products. A ban was also placed on unloading food waste from ships and aircraft, and the Agricultural and Livestock Health Inspection Offices (OISAs) at ports, airports and borders, as well as the Federal Inspection points at Quarantine Areas, were instructed to tighten the inspection and surveillance measures to prevent the introduction or movement of risk goods through tourists, by using the 320 phytozoosanitary officials who have included a further 187 professionals hired since 2001, to avoid introducing foot-and-mouth and other exotic diseases into Mexico.

7. These prohibitions will apply until sufficient information is obtained on the diagnosis, prevention, control and eradication mechanisms to analyse and determine the risk of introducing and spreading BSE, by importing products and by-products of animal origin into Mexico and to introduce the requisite sanitary measures to prevent this happening.
