

**UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS IN CANADA REGARDING
BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (BSE)**

Statement by Canada to the WTO SPS Committee October 2004

The following communication, received on 1st November 2004, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Canada.

The following is an up-date on Canada's regulatory response to the discovery of a BSE case in Alberta, Canada in May 2003, and on trade-related issues.

I. CANADA'S REGULATORY RESPONSE

1. From the beginning, Canada has kept its trading partners fully informed of its regulatory response by all available means including:

- regular reports to this Committee;
- regular reports to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE);
- bilateral representations by Ministers and officials from Ottawa and by Canadian Embassies, Consulates and Trade Offices abroad;
- numerous technical level missions, both foreign missions to Canada, and Canadian missions abroad; and
- updated information provided on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's website at www.inspection.gc.ca.

2. Systematically, Canada had proactively taken a number of measures to secure the safety of our animal health, public health and food safety inspection systems even before the detection of BSE in a domestic cow in May 2003. These measures included:

- the prohibition on imports of meat and bone meal for several decades from European countries;
- the suspension of the import of live cattle from the United Kingdom in 1989;
- the placing of all the United Kingdom imported animals under a monitoring program and the declaration of BSE as a reportable disease in 1990;
- the commencement of surveillance activities in 1992 which exceeded the recommendations of the OIE;
- the removal of all remaining animals imported from the United Kingdom from the Canadian population in 1994;
- the implementation of a ruminant feed ban in 1997; and
- the implementation of a mandatory cattle identification system in 2001.

3. The investigation into the May 2003 detection of BSE was reviewed by an international panel of BSE experts who praised Canada's transparency, risk communication approach, the scope and thoroughness of the epidemiological investigation and the competency of our veterinary services.

4. Further adjustments were introduced in July 2003 to require the removal of specified risk material from all cattle slaughtered for human food, to maximize food safety and public health protection. Surveillance activities were increased in order to determine the true prevalence of BSE and to demonstrate and verify the effectiveness of measures previously instituted. In addition, on 9 July 2004, the Government of Canada announced that it intends to require the removal of bovine specified risk material from the entire animal feed chain to supplement the previous ruminant feed ban established in 1997. The draft regulations regarding the removal of specified risk material from feed will be published in Canada and notified to WTO Members in the coming weeks.

II. TRADE-RELATED ISSUES

5. Canada has been pleased by the response of those trading partners which have taken steps to restore market access for beef, meat products, genetics and other animal products. Naturally, Canada is disappointed that some trading partners continue to prevent access to safe Canadian products, including meat. It is particularly frustrated by those countries who continue to prevent access to products identified by the OIE as being safe for trade without restriction such as semen, embryos, and protein free tallow. Canada calls on those Members to immediately remove any such restrictions. In addition, it is requesting all trading partners to restore access for the full range of edible meat and meat products from cattle based on appropriate certification regarding the removal of specified risk material in a hygienic manner, and live animals born after the implementation of the 1997 feed ban.

6. For those markets which have opened, export volumes for beef and meat products have returned to levels close to those experienced prior to the BSE case. This speaks highly of the international confidence in the integrity of Canada's inspection systems and credibility of its certification programs.

7. Canada has accelerated the review of its own BSE import policy. It is expecting to publish and notify to the WTO a draft revised import policy, based on OIE standards, in the coming weeks.

8. To conclude, Canada will continue to work cooperatively with all of its trading partners to resume trade for the fullest possible range of products under safe and practical conditions.
