

Canada Announces BSE

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the infected animal spent time on those farms. All animals on these farms will be depopulated and tested for BSE, said NCBA.

USDA undersecretary Bill Hawks has told a Senate appropriations subcommittee hearing that Canadian officials indicated none of the quarantined cattle were ever in the U.S.

According to Canadian officials, meat from the infected cow did not enter the food supply. The animal had been on the farm in Alberta for three years. Although BSE has not been shown to be transmitted among cows in a herd, as a precaution the herd in Alberta is being destroyed.

The USDA has stopped all cattle, beef, sheep, and goat imports from Canada until further notice. This includes all live animals and all ruminant animal food products.

The USDA has also sent technical team to Canada to assist in the investigation.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said Tuesday, "I have spoken with Canada's Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief a short time ago about Canada's investigation and feel that all appropriate measures are being taken in what appears to be an isolated case of BSE."

"Information suggests that risk to human health and the possibility of transmission to animals in the United States is very low," Veneman said.

"In 1997, the Food and Drug Administration prohibited the use of most mammalian protein in the manufacture of animal feed intended for cows and other ruminants to stop the way the disease is thought to spread."

Since 1989, the U.S. government has taken a series of preventative actions to protect

against BSE. This includes USDA prohibitions on the import of live ruminants, such as cattle, sheep, goats and most ruminant products from countries that have or are considered to be at risk for BSE.

To date, no case of BSE has ever been found in the U.S., despite years of intensive testing for the disease.

"We do not have any cases of BSE in Pennsylvania or the United States," said Dr. John Enck, Pennsylvania's state veterinarian.

"We have been testing, and we had enhanced our surveillances last year," he said. Also last year "there were more than 20,000 head of cattle tested in the United States and they were all negative."

In addition, "BSE is transmitted by eating the prions (disease-causing protein particles) which occur in the feed from contaminated products," said Dr. John Enck, Pennsylvania's state veterinarian.

The animal must eat "ren-

dered products that now, of course, would be illegal to feed — and have been illegal since 1997 in the United States and in Canada — to feed those particular products to animals.

"It is not like a virus — they have to eat the prion in order to get the disease," said Enck.

Veterinary drugs are not made from rendered cattle and there is no evidence of any association of veterinary drugs with BSE.

According to the NCBA, consumers should continue to eat beef with confidence. The animal in question did not enter the food supply.

Americans can be confident in the safety of U.S. beef for a number of reasons, said the NCBA:

- The BSE agent is not found in meat. It is found in central nervous system tissue such as brain and spinal cord.

- All U.S. cattle are inspected by a veterinarian before going to slaughter. Animals with any signs of neurological disorder are not permitted to enter the human food chain and are tested for BSE. These samples are sent overnight to a federal laboratory, and the average turn-around time for the test is eight days.

- BSE affects older cattle, over 36 months of age. The vast majority of the cattle going to market in the U.S. are less than 24 months old. BSE has never been

found in commercial cattle less than 24 months of age.

- 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. The U.S. banned imports of cattle and bovine products from countries with BSE beginning in 1989.

- A multi-year risk analysis conducted by Harvard University reported "the U.S. is highly resistant to any introduction of BSE."

- Some media reports are speculating a link between chronic wasting disease in deer and BSE in cattle. This is not the case, according to the NCBA. Multiple research projects indicate there is no cross species transmission under natural conditions. This includes a 10-year trial at Colorado State University, now in its sixth year, in which cattle are co-mingled in a secure area with CWD-infected deer.

According to NCBA officials, the U.S. has the safest food supply of any country in the world. Beef producers have enhanced product safety in recent years through checkoff-funded research and have specifically funded research that strengthens knowledge of BSE to help assure the security of U.S. beef products.

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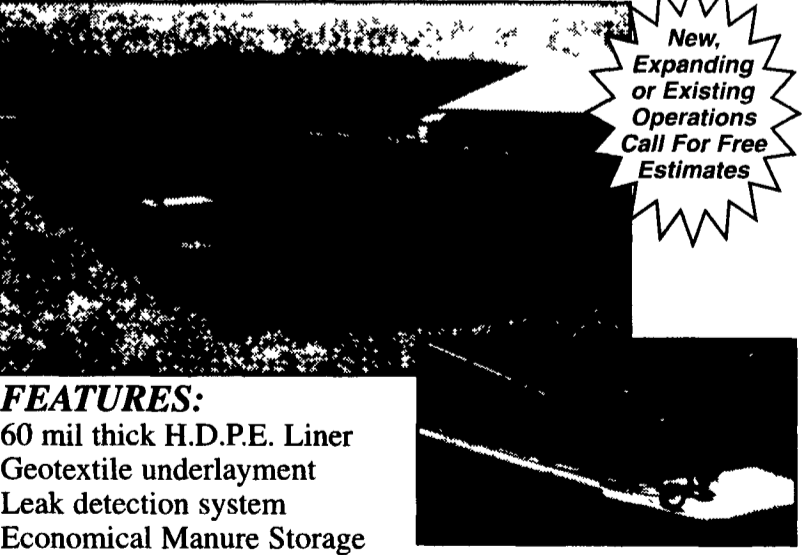
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