

Opinion of the
Scientific Steering Committee
on the
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF
BOVINE SPONGIFORM
ENCEPHALOPATHY (GBR) in
New Caledonia
Adopted by the SSC on
6 March 2003

**Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY
(GBR)
in New Caledonia 2003**

THE QUESTION

The Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) was asked by the Commission to provide an up-to-date scientific opinion on the Geographical BSE risk (GBR), i.e. the likelihood of the presence of one or more cattle being infected with BSE, pre-clinically as well as clinically, in countries that have formally requested the determination of their BSE status in accordance with Article 5 of the Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

This opinion addresses the GBR of New Caledonia as assessed in 2003.

THE ANSWER

Due to the fact that only negligible BSE infectivity entered the country, there was no risk that BSE infectivity was recycled or propagated. It is therefore concluded that it is highly unlikely that domestic cattle are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent (**GBR-I**).

The SSC is concerned that the available information was not confirmed by inspection missions as they are performed by the FVO in the Member States. It recommends that BSE-related aspects are included in the program of future inspection missions, as far as feasible.

THE BACKGROUND

In July 2000 the SSC adopted its final opinion on "the Geographical Risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (GBR)". It described a method and a process for the assessment of the GBR and summarised the outcome of its application to 23 countries. Detailed reports on the GBR-assessments were published on the Internet for each of these countries.

On 1 July 2001 Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council entered into force. This regulation lays down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in animals (TSE Regulation). Appropriate risk management measures are defined in relation to the BSE Status category. In Annex II of this Regulation the method for the determination of the BSE status is described. It requires two steps, namely a risk assessment and the evaluation of specific criteria listed in annex II, chapter A, point (b) to (e). The Commission regards the GBR as provided by the SSC as an adequate Risk Assessment as required by the regulation. However, countries may also provide their own risk assessment in which case the SSC will be requested to provide a scientific opinion on the validity of that risk assessment as well as of its result.

In January 2002 the SSC updated its opinion on the GBR and determined that exports from all countries classified as GBR III or IV pose a certain risk of carrying the BSE-agent, independent if they have or have not confirmed at least one domestic BSE case. The SSC also provided an estimate of the level of risk emitted from these "BSE risk countries" in relation to the time of export.

New Caledonia has formally requested the determination of its BSE status in accordance with Article 5 of the TSE Regulation and subsequently the Commission asked the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) to provide a scientific opinion on the Geographical BSE risk of New Caledonia.

THE RISK ASSESSMENT

The SSC concluded that it was “highly unlikely” (**GBR I**) that domestic cattle in New Caledonia are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent.

THE ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

New Caledonia was exposed to a **negligible external challenge** from 1980 – 2001. In total the country imported over the period 1980-2001, 3 live cattle and 2 tons of MBM from France.

STABILITY

On the basis of the available information it was concluded that the country’s BSE/cattle system was **extremely unstable** between 1980-1997 and **very unstable** between 1998-2002. This indicates that BSE infectivity, if imported, could have reached domestic cattle and could have been recycled and amplified.

Feeding

Until February 1997 dairy cattle received regularly supplementary feed possibly containing MBM. It is therefore concluded that feeding was **“not OK”** until 1997 and **“reasonably OK”** since 1998 because it seems that after the installation of the feed ban, cross-contamination remained possible.

Rendering

The rendering process applied in the only rendering plant of the country is not able to reduce BSE infectivity, should it be present in the raw material. Rendering is therefore regarded **“not OK”**.

SRM-removal

SRM is rendered as far as it is included in the animal waste from the slaughterhouse to which the rendering plant is attached. SRM-removal is therefore **“not OK”**.

Fallen stock and slaughterhouse waste from small slaughterhouses is not rendered but incinerated or buried.

BSE surveillance

The existing BSE surveillance is only passive (if existing at all) and mainly based on ante mortem inspection. Hence the BSE surveillance of New Caledonia was not able to detect clinical BSE-cases, should they have occurred.

CONCLUSION ON THE CURRENT GBR

Due to the negligible risk that BSE-infectivity entered the country there was no risk that BSE-infectivity was recycled or propagated. It is therefore concluded that it is highly unlikely that domestic cattle are (clinically or pre-clinically) infected with the BSE-agent (**GBR-I**).

EXPECTED DEVELOPMENT OF THE GBR

As long as no external challenge occurs and thus assuming that New Caledonia can continue preventing the BSE-agent from entering the country, it will remain highly unlikely that cattle are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE-agent. However, given the low stability of the system any such external challenge could lead to the building up of an internal challenge.

A table summarising the reasons for the current assessment is given in annex 1 to this opinion. A detailed report on the assessment of the GBR of New Caledonia as produced by the GBR-Peer Group is published separately on the Internet. The country had opportunities to comment on different drafts of the report before the SSC took both, the report and the comments, into account for producing this opinion. The SSC appreciates the good co-operation of the country's authorities.

New Caledonia – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, December 2002							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-2001: Negligible		1980-1997: Extremely unstable 1998-2002: Very unstable				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	BSE surveillance	
I	<p>UK: No cattle were imported from UK</p> <p>Other BSE risk countries: according to Eurostat and other data, 3 live cattle were imported from France</p>	<p>UK: No MBM imports</p> <p>Other BSE risk countries: According to country import data: 80-85: 0 t 86-90: 0 t 91-95: 0 t 96-2000: 2 t Total: 2 t</p> <p>According to Eurostat and other import data a total of 2 ton was imported from France</p>	<p>Not OK until 1997.</p> <p>Reasonably OK as from 1998</p>	Not OK until 2001	Not OK until 2001	Only passive surveillance	<p>Any external challenge could have led to an internal challenge.</p> <p>However, as almost no imports from BSE risk countries could be identified it is highly unlikely that an internal challenge ever occurred in New Caledonia.</p>
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE
							<p>The occurrence of an internal challenge is regarded as highly unlikely.</p>