

Opinion of the
Scientific Steering Committee
on the
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF
BOVINE SPONGIFORM
ENCEPHALOPATHY (GBR) in
URUGUAY

adopted by the SSC on 10 April 2003

**Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY
(GBR)
in Uruguay – update 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 up-to-date GBR of Uruguay as assessed in April 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 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.

Uruguay 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 an up-to-date scientific opinion on the Geographical BSE risk of Uruguay

THE RISK ASSESSMENT

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

THE ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

As only very few cattle and no MBM were imported into Uruguay from BSE risk countries, the **external challenge** was always **negligible**.

STABILITY

On the basis of the available information it was concluded that the country's BSE/cattle system was **very unstable** from 1980 to 1995 and **unstable** from 1996 until today. This indicates that BSE infectivity, if imported, could have reached domestic cattle and could have been recycled and amplified.

Feeding

Feeding of MMBM to cattle was legally possible until 1996, even if apparently uncommon before that date. Therefore feeding is assessed "**not OK**" from 1980 until 1995. Since 1996 a mammalian MBM to ruminant feed ban is in force and a control program was installed, which was applied until the end of 1999. Due to the fact that the authorities themselves do not consider the analytical methods used to have been reliable for the monitoring of the feed ban, feeding is assessed as "**reasonably OK**" since 1996 until today.

Rendering

The rendering systems do not appear to meet the 133°C/3 bar/20 min. standard. Therefore, rendering is assessed as "**not OK**" throughout the reference period.

SRM-removal

As SRM from cattle fit for human consumption are eaten, this factor can be considered to be "**reasonably OK**". SRM from condemned or fallen stock is digested and buried or sent directly to a landfill and it is unlikely that it could reach cattle.

BSE surveillance

Regarding the surveillance system, Uruguay would most probably not be able to detect small numbers of clinical BSE-cases.

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, the GBR will remain as low as it is. However, given the low stability of the system, any 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 updated assessment of the GBR of Uruguay 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.

Uruguay – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, April 2003							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-2001: Negligible		1980-1995: Very unstable; 1996-today: Unstable				
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	BSE surveillance	
I	<p>UK: 10 cattle according to the country import data and confirmed by Eurostat and other data</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries:</u> No imports according to the country import data. 272 cattle from France according Eurostat</p> <p><u>Comment:</u> The country veterinary services found no evidence of these imports from France in their statistics. The French authorities confirmed that data were not correct. It is assumed that no animals were imported</p>	<p>UK: No imports according to the country import data and to Eurostat and other data</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries:</u> No imports according to the country import data and to Eurostat and other data .</p>	<p>Not OK 1980-1995; reasonably OK 1996-today.</p> <p>Feeding of MMBM to cattle was legally possible until 1996, even if apparently uncommon before that date.</p> <p>Since 1996 a mammalian MBM to ruminant feed ban is in force and a control program was installed, which was applied until the end of 1999 but it seems that the authorities themselves do not consider the analytical methods used to have been reliable for the monitoring of the feed ban.</p>	<p>Not OK 1980-today.</p> <p>The rendering systems do not appear to meet the 133°C/3 bar/20 min. standard.</p>	<p>Reasonably OK 1980-today.</p> <p>SRM from cattle fit for human consumption are consumed by the human population.</p> <p>SRM from condemned cattle or fallen stock is “digested” and buried or sent directly to a landfill and it is unlikely that it could reach cattle</p>	<p>BSE is notifiable since 1994.</p> <p>With the surveillance system in place, it would most probably not be possible to detect small numbers of clinical BSE-cases</p>	The BSE/cattle system of Uruguay was since 1980 not exposed to a significant external challenge.
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE