

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

Adopted by the SSC on 27 June 2002

Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the **GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (GBR) in Iceland – 2002**

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 Iceland as assessed in June 2002.

THE ANSWER

Due to the fact that no 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.

Iceland 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 Iceland.

THE RISK ASSESSMENT

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

THE ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

As no cattle and only very low amounts of MBM were imported to Iceland 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 **extremely unstable** from 1980-1996, became **very unstable** in 1997 and is **unstable** since 2001. This indicates that BSE infectivity, if imported, could have reached domestic cattle and could have been recycled and amplified.

Feeding

According to Iceland, there is a “verbal agreement” not to use MBM in ruminant feed since 1978. However, no regulation was issued and no compliance data were provided. Feeding is therefore regarded as “**not OK**” until 2000. There is a ban of MBM from feed for food-animals since January 2001 but fishmeal is still permitted, also in cattle feed. Because cattle feed is not examined for MBM contamination and cross-contamination cannot be excluded feeding is only “**reasonably OK**” since 1/1/2001.

Rendering

It was convincingly demonstrated that rendering plants in Iceland have applied the rendering standard reliably (133°C/3 bar/20min) since end 1996 although these conditions are legally mandatory only since the year 2000. Rendering is therefore assessed as “**not OK**” until 1996 and as **reasonably OK** since 1997.

SRM-removal

No SRM ban is in force in Iceland. Fallen stock is buried. SRM removal is therefore assessed as “**not OK**” throughout the reference period.

BSE surveillance

BSE surveillance is not adequate to detect clinical BSE incidence at low level.

CONCLUSION ON THE CURRENT GBR

Due to the fact that no BSE infectivity entered the country, there was no risk that BSE infectivity entered processing, 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 Iceland 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.

Iceland – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, June 2002							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-2000: Negligible		1980-1996: Extremely unstable 1997-2000: Very unstable since 2001: Unstable				The BSE/cattle system of Iceland was since 1980 not exposed to a significant external challenge.
GBR-Level	Live Cattle imports	MBM imports	Feeding	Rendering	SRM-removal	BSE surveillance	
I	<p>UK: No imports according to country import data and to other export data.</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries:</u> No imports according to the country import data and to other export data.</p>	<p>UK: No imports according to country import data. 4,607 t according to other export data but not confirmed.</p> <p><u>Other BSE risk countries:</u> No imports according to country import data.</p> <p>According to other export data: 86-90: 25 t (NL, not confirmed) 96-2000: 6 t (DK, feather meal) Total: 31 t</p>	<p>Not OK 1980-2000, Reasonably OK since 2001.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 1978 “verbal agreement” not to use MBM for ruminant feeding purposes but no regulation issued or compliance data provided. Since January 2001, ban of MBM from feed for animals used for food production, but fishmeal still permitted. Cattle feed not examined for MBM; cross-contamination cannot be excluded. 	<p>Not OK 1980-1996, Reasonably OK since 1997.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convincing evidence that that rendering plants have been operating under 133°C/3 bar/20min since end 1996. Only since 2000 these conditions are legally mandatory. 	<p>Not OK 1980-2001.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No SRM ban in force and rendered material included and still includes SRM. Fallen stock buried. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSE has been notifiable disease since 1993. Suspects fully compensated, incl. production losses. Awareness training since 1988. BSE-surveillance since 1996 but not adequate to detect low level of clinical BSE incidence. 	
GBR-trend							INTERNAL CHALLENGE