

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

adopted by the SSC on 10 April 2003

**Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on the
GEOGRAPHICAL RISK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY
(GBR)
in CHILE – 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 Chile 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 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.

Chile 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 Chile.

THE RISK ASSESSMENT

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

THE ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

As only very few cattle and MBM tons were imported into Chile 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 until today. This indicates that BSE infectivity, if imported, could have reached domestic cattle and could have been recycled and amplified.

Feeding

Until December 2000 it was legally possible to feed MBM to cattle. According to information provided by the country, although it was done at a low level, MBM was exceptionally used to feed cattle. Even after the introduction of the ruminant MBM to ruminant feed ban in the end of 2000 it is still legal to use non-ruminant MBM for cattle. Experience in EU has shown that a ruminant MBM to ruminant feed ban is extremely difficult to control. Therefore feeding is considered as “**not OK**” throughout the reference period.

Rendering

Rendering exists in Chile and is common practice. Also bovine material is usually rendered. Until 2001, the rendering systems did not appear to meet the 133°C/3bar/20min standard. It is therefore assumed that they were not able to reduce BSE infectivity. Since 2001, the 133°C/3bar/20min standard is obligatory, although some rendering plants seem not to be able to comply with it. Therefore, rendering is considered as “**not OK**” throughout the reference period.

SRM-removal

As there is no SRM ban in Chile and SRM is usually rendered, SRM-removal is considered as “**not OK**”, throughout the reference period.

BSE surveillance

The level of surveillance was and is not able to detect low levels of BSE incidence.

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 Chile 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.

Chile – Summary of the GBR-Assessment, April 2003							
	EXTERNAL CHALLENGE		STABILITY				INTERACTION of EXTERNAL CHALLENGE and STABILITY
	1980-2001: Negligible		1980-today: Extremely unstable				The BSE/cattle system of Chile 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. This is confirmed by UK and Eurostat export data.</p> <p>Other BSE risk countries: 65 cattle imported from Denmark according to country export data and confirmed by Eurostat data.</p>	<p>UK: no imports according to the country import data. Confirmed by UK and Eurostat export data.</p> <p>Other BSE risk countries: According to country import data: from DK 96-2000: 49 t Total: 49 t</p> <p>According to Eurostat and other export data: from DK 96-2000: 28 t Total: 28 t</p> <p>Comment: All imports were traced and found having been exclusively used for fish feed, mainly for export to Japan.</p>	<p>not OK 1980-today</p> <p>Until December 2000 it was legally possible to feed MBM to cattle.</p> <p>MBM was used to feed cattle at a low level.</p> <p>Even after the introduction of the ruminant MBM to ruminant feed ban in late 2000 it is still legal to use non-ruminant MBM for cattle.</p>	<p>not OK 1980-today</p> <p>Rendering exists in Chile and is common practice.</p> <p>Also bovine material is usually rendered.</p> <p>Until 2001, the rendering systems did not appear to meet the 133°C/3bar/20min standard.</p> <p>Since 2001, the 133°C/3bar/20min standard is obligatory, but compliance rate is not 100%.</p>	<p>not OK 1980-today</p> <p>No SRM ban in place. SRM is usually rendered.</p>	<p>BSE is notifiable since 1990</p> <p>The level of surveillance was and is not able to detect low levels of BSE incidence.</p>	INTERNAL CHALLENGE
GBR-trend			The occurrence of an internal challenge since 1980 is regarded as highly unlikely.				