

Opinion on the Geographical risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (GBR) in Uruguay adopted on 12/01/2001

The Question

The Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) was asked by the Commission to express its 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, at a given point in time, in a number of Third Countries.

This opinion addresses the GBR of Uruguay.

The Background

In December 1997 the SSC expressed its first opinion on Specified Risk Materials where it stated, inter alia, that the list of SRM could probably be modulated in the light of the species, the age and the geographical origin of the animals in question.

In June 2000 the European Commission adopted a Decision on SRM (2000/418/EC), prohibiting the import of SRM from all Third Countries that have not been "satisfactorily" assessed with regard to their BSE-Risk.

In July 2000 the SSC adopted its final opinion on "the Geographical Risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (GBR)". This opinion 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-assessment were published on the Internet for each of these countries.

In September 2000 the Commission invited 46 Third Countries, which are authorised to export products to the EU that are listed in annex II to the above mentioned SRM-Decision, to provide a dossier for the assessment of their GBR.

Until today 28 dossiers have been received and 27 are in an advanced state of assessment.

This opinion concerns only one country, Uruguay, that for several reasons could be finalised earlier than all other files.

The Commission requested this SSC opinion on the GBR of this, and of all Third Countries that provide the necessary information, as essential input into its Decision concerning the treatment of SRM that will be requested from Third Countries exporting certain products, listed in Annex II to the Commission Decision on SRM, to the EU.

The Analysis

Uruguay was exposed to an overall *negligible external challenge* throughout the reference period (1980-1999). Neither the imports of live cattle nor of MBM, MM, BM or Greaves from countries that were affected by BSE reached non-negligible levels. Hence it is highly unlikely that the BSE agent was imported into the country.

In addition to this negligible external challenge, the BSE/cattle system of Uruguay was and is neutrally stable; mainly because SRM are used for human consumption or, as all condemned material, are rendered for fertiliser use.

It is therefore concluded that it is highly unlikely that one or several cattle that are (pre-clinically or clinically) infected with the BSE agent are currently present in the domestic herd of Uruguay. Given the neutrally stable system it is unlikely that the GBR will increase in the future, at least as long external challenges can be avoided.

This favourable assessment is mainly depending on the negligible external challenge. If this assumption should be proved wrong, the assessment would have to be revised.

A summary of the reasons for the current assessment is given in annex 1 to this opinion.

A detailed report on the assessment of the GBR of Uruguay is published separately on the Internet. It was produced by the GBR-task force of the SSC-secretariat and peer reviewed by the GBR-Peer group. The country had two 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, January 2001 | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| | EXTERNAL CHALLENGE | | STABILITY | | | | INTERACTION EXTERNAL CHALLENGE/STABILITY |
| | Negligible | | Neutrally stable | | | | |
| <i>GBR-Level</i> | <i>Live Cattle</i> | <i>MBM</i> | <i>Feeding</i> | <i>Rendering</i> | <i>SRM-removal</i> | <i>Surveillance, cross-contamination</i> | |
| I | 10 cattle were imported from UK (8 in 1980 and 2 in 1988). No animals were slaughtered or rendered, all were destroyed on the farm. | No imports have ever taken place from UK or other BSE-affected countries. | Reasonably OK: pasture feeding with plant derived supplements, MBM-ban in '96. Before: no price incentive for MBM; sufficient protein-supply from grazing; fear that excess protein would have negative impact on productivity. | Not OK: not equivalent to 133/20/3 standard, condemned material rendered for use as fertiliser. | OK : human consumption of cattle brains, spinal cord and most other edible offal. | <i>Surveillance :</i> passive, retrospective + active since '98, good. <i>Cross-contamination:</i> Sufficient controls, all negative, but no separate production lines in feed mills. | A neutrally stable system was never exposed to any non-negligible external challenge. Even if an external challenge had occurred, recycling and amplification of it would have been unlikely. |
| GBR-trend | | | | | | | INTERNAL CHALLENGE |
| P | | | | | | | Highly unlikely to have been present at any time. |