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BSE Situation in France - February 2005

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Report Highlights:

Since the beginning of 2005, 5 bovine BSE cases have been confirmed in France. In 2004, there were 54 cases confirmed, against 137 in 2003 and 239 in 2002. 951 cases have been confirmed since 1991.

A case of BSE in a goat is confirmed in France : the EU Commission expands testing program.

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BSE Cases in Bovine

Since the beginning of 2005, 5 BSE cases have been confirmed in France. In 2004, there were 54 cases confirmed, against 137 in 2003 and 239 in 2002. 951 cases have been confirmed since 1991.

In 2005, one case was discovered under the national network of routine clinical BSE surveillance; one case was found via the epidemiological BSE surveillance program of risk bovine; and 3 cases were detected by the over-24-month testing program as a result of the 45,925 tests performed between January 1st and 30, 2005, on animals to be slaughtered as they enter the food chain.

In 2004, 17 cases had been detected by the over-24-month testing program as a result of the 2,618,151 tests performed between January 1st and December 31, on animals to be slaughtered as they enter the food chain. In 2003, 37 cases had been detected by the same program as a result of 2,900,464 tests.

Case of BSE in a goat confirmed: the EU Commission expands testing program

A suspected case of BSE in a goat slaughtered in France in 2002 has been confirmed by a panel of European scientists (http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/food/biosafety/bse/crl_statement_tse_goats_28-01-05_en.pdf).

The European Commission proposes to step up testing to determine if this is an isolated incident. Although this is the first time that BSE has been found in a goat under natural conditions, precautionary measures to protect consumers from this eventuality have been applied in the EU for several years. The level of TSE infection in goats seems however to be extremely low and any possible risk to consumers is minimal. The European Commission asked the French authorities to submit their preliminary findings to the Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) for TSEs based in Weybridge, UK (see [IP/04/1324](#)). TSEs are transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, namely BSE affecting cattle and scrapie affecting goats and sheep.

Existing safety measures

For many years, safety measures have been applied to all farmed ruminants (cattle, goats, sheep) to offer maximum public health protection in case BSE in goats was ever confirmed. These safety measures include the ban on feeding animal proteins in the form of meat-and-bone meal (MBM), the removal of specified risk materials (i.e. the removal of tissues such as brain, spinal cord, part of the intestines) from the food and feed chain, the slaughtering of herds affected by scrapie (a disease of goats and sheep similar to BSE but not infectious for humans), and a TSE monitoring and testing program in all Member States. Over 140,000 goats have been tested since April 2002, including random testing of healthy animals, sick animals and those that die on the farm.

Expansion of testing regime

Following this confirmation, the Commission is proposing increased testing for BSE among goats for at least 6 months (200 000 tests of healthy goats in the EU) to determine if this is an isolated incident. The extent of the monitoring program will be based on the goat population in each Member State and will focus primarily on Member States where BSE is present in the cattle population. All confirmed TSE cases will be subjected to a three-step

testing scheme, already in use, which will make it possible to differentiate between scrapie and BSE.

The complete EU press release dated 28 January 2005 is on :
http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/index_en.htm

These additional measures were approved by Member States at the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health on 2-3 February 2005.