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## Germany

### Livestock and Products

## Germany plans to adjust BSE testing age to EU level 2006

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**Report Highlights:**

EU law requires all cattle above 30 months to be tested for BSE, while German law prescribes tests starting at the age of 24 months. Based on a joint risk assessment by the German Federal Research Institute for Animal Health (FLI) and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), the Deputy State Secretaries of Agriculture and Food Safety of the 16 German states recommend adjusting the BSE testing requirement to the EU wide standard. The change is expected to go into effect in April.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Berlin [GM1]  
[GM]

The EU requires routine BSE testing at slaughter for all cattle above 30 months of age. Only at risk animals<sup>1</sup> have to be tested already at above 24 months of age. Currently, the German government requires routine BSE tests for all cattle above 24 months of age, irrespective of their risk status. The mandatory BSE tests went into effect in January 2001.

For the past two years, the issue of replacing the 24-months German requirement with the EU standard has been discussed. The German meat industry claimed that the lower testing age puts them at a competitive disadvantage compared to other EU producers; without giving extra benefits to the consumers. The German Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection estimates the additional costs for BSE tests of animals between 24 and 30 months in 2005 at around U.S. \$ 4.8 million (4 million Euro<sup>2</sup>).

Currently, the transmission through meat and bone meal (MBM) is the most widely accepted theory for contracting BSE. MBM was banned from animal feed in Germany in December of 2000. Thus, theoretically, from June 2003 onwards, all animals slaughtered at 30 months or younger should not have had contact with feed containing MBM.

In a two day meeting with scientists of the German Federal Research Institute for Animal Health (*Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, FLI*) and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (*Bundesinstitut fuer Risikobewertung, BfR*), the Deputy State Secretaries for Agriculture and Food Safety of the 16 German states on February 9, 2006, came to the conclusion that lifting the general testing age in Germany to the EU level of 30 months would not pose a threat to public health.

Amending the pertinent law requires the approval of both chambers, the *Bundestag* (German equivalent of U.S. House of Representatives) and *Bundesrat* (German equivalent to the U.S. Senate). The legal process takes a minimum of six weeks. Therefore, we expect the adjusted testing requirement to go into effect in April.

#### Related reports:

GM1033	11/27/2001	One year after the detection of BSE in Germany (Includes a detailed outline of the German risk management system)
GM3006	02/27/2003	German Cattle Identification and Beef Labeling
GM6003	01/27/2006	BSE in Germany - Update Covering 2005

Reports can be accessed through the FAS websites at:  
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/AttacheRep/default.asp>

<sup>1</sup> Risk animals include deceased animals, animals that died in transit, downers (i.e. non-ambulatory animals), animals that show any kind of disease symptoms, animals that show clinical BSE symptoms, or were part of destroyed herds or cohorts of a previously confirmed BSE case (birth cohort = animals born on the same farm within 12 months before or after the birth; feeding cohort = animals that were raised together with animal with confirmed BSE within the first 12 months of life of the latter, all offspring).

<sup>2</sup> Calculation based on average costs for a BSE test of 15.30 Euro and 263,000 animals slaughtered between the age of 24 and 30 months.