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Report Name: MHLW Proposes Limiting SRM Scope for Domestic Cattle

Country: Japan

Post: Tokyo

Report Category: Livestock and Products, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

On November 12, Japan's Food Safety Commission (FSC) Prion Subcommittee began its review of a proposal by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) to reduce the scope of specified risk materials (SRMs) for domestic cattle as part of Japan's bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) countermeasures.

General Information:

On November 12, Japan's Food Safety Commission (FSC) Prion Subcommittee held a public meeting to initiate its review of a proposal from the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (MHLW) to revise the current definition of specified risk materials (SRMs) for domestic cattle as a part of Japan's bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) countermeasures.

Currently, the Japanese government defines SRMs to include the tonsils and distal ileum of the small intestine from all cattle, and the spinal cord, vertebral column, and head (excluding tongue, cheek meat, and skin) from cattle 30 months or older. As part of the current FSC review, MHLW proposed that the new definition of SRM only include the spinal cord and head (excluding tongue, cheek meat, skin and tonsils) of cattle 30 months or older. All other SRM definitions are proposed to be deleted (see Appendix Table). In this case, there would be no SRMs for cattle less than 30 months of age. MHLW explained that its proposal took into consideration the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) recommendation that SRMs are unnecessary in negligible risk countries as well as practices taken by trading partners such as the European Union, Canada, and the United States.

The FSC committee members indicated that they would examine the risks associated with variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) as a result of potential human consumption of the vertebral column derived from atypical L-type BSE (L-BSE) affected cattle.

The last change recommended by the FSC to Japan's domestic BSE countermeasures occurred in July 2016 when the FSC recommended MHLW to eliminate age-based BSE testing for cattle (see JA6017). Following the FSC's recommendation, MHLW removed domestic age-based testing requirements in April 2017 (see JA7031). After the change in domestic requirements, the FSC initiated a review of age-based requirements placed on imported beef from the United States in April 2018 and recommended in January 2019 to remove those requirements. As a result, in May 2019, MHLW formally removed the requirement that U.S. beef exported to Japan be derived from cattle less than 30 months of age (see JA9054). However, due to remaining differences between U.S. and Japanese regulations, including but not limited to SRM definitions, U.S. beef exports to Japan must comply with the relevant Export Verification (EV) program administered the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). See the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service Export Library for more details.

Appendix Table: FAS/Tokyo Comparison of SRM Definitions

Japan (current)	Japan (proposed)	United States
All cattle: Tonsils and ileum (two meters from the appendix) **30 months or more:** Vertebral column (including dorsal root ganglion, but excluding transverse cervical protrusion, thoracic transverse process, transverse lumbar protrusion, cervical spines, thoracic spines, lumbar spines, wings of sacrum, median sacral crest, and tail vertebrae), head (excluding tongue, cheek meat, skin and tonsils), and spinal cord	**30 months or more:** Head (excluding tongue, cheek meat, skin, and tonsils) and spinal cord	**All cattle:** Tonsils and distal ileum of the small intestine **30 months or more:** Brain, skull, eyes, trigeminal ganglia (nerves attached to the brain), spinal cord, vertebral column (excluding the vertebrae of the tail, the transverse processes of the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, and the wings of the sacrum), and dorsal root ganglia (nerves attached to the spinal cord)

Attachments:

No Attachments.