

Cattle Feeding Restrictions to Prevent Mad Cow Disease (BSE)

(Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy)

R. Harmata and R. Morton, Biosecurity and Product Integrity, Darwin

WHAT IS BSE?

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) or “Mad Cow Disease” affects the nervous system of cattle. It is caused by a prion, which is an infectious protein particle. The disease is most prevalent in Europe, but has been also detected in the USA, Canada and Japan. It has been shown to spread through meat and bone meal fed to cattle. There is good evidence to suggest that the prions can cause neurological disease in humans who eat meat contaminated with nervous tissue from infected animals. In humans the disease is known as variant CJD.

Australia has not had BSE and since 1988, when BSE was first detected in Europe, has banned the importation of cattle, embryos and meat and bone meal from infected countries. Fortunately, Australia has not imported meat and bone meal except from NZ, since 1986.



RUMINANT FEED RESTRICTIONS

Australia, including the Northern Territory, enjoys a global reputation for being free of BSE and other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.

Stock feed manufacturers, sellers of stock food, and livestock producers need to be mindful of the need to protect our BSE-free status by rigorous adherence to the ruminant feed ban and related legislation.

Australia has a ban on feeding ruminant animals with any material from vertebrate animals other than tallow, gelatin, milk products of Australian origin, and oils extracted from fish. The ban prohibits feeding ruminants meat meal, bone meal, blood meal, fish meal, poultry meal, feather meal and poultry manure. These products are collectively known as restricted animal materials (RAM). The ban is compulsory under State and Territory laws. The bans ensure that Australia remains free from BSE and reassure both local and overseas consumers that our meat is safe.

The ruminant feed ban, and its diligent enforcement, will ensure that if the disease agent that causes BSE is ever inadvertently introduced into Australia, it would not be able to establish a cycle of infection.

NATIONAL TRANSMISSABLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (TSE) SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM (NTSESP)

The objective of NTSESP is to support trade by maintaining a TSE surveillance system which is consistent with the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and which assures all countries that import cattle, sheep and deer products from Australia, that Australia remains free of these diseases.

STOCKFEED

When buying stock feed for ruminants including cattle, sheep, goats and deer make sure that it does not contain RAM.

Labels on stock feed containing RAM now carry this statement:

This product contains restricted animal material. DO NOT FEED TO CATTLE, SHEEP, GOATS, DEER OR OTHER RUMINANTS.

If the product is suitable for ruminants the label will state:

THIS PRODUCT DOES NOT CONTAIN RESTRICTED ANIMAL MATERIAL.

Unless the label clearly states that the feed is suitable, do not feed it to your animals.

POULTRY LITTER AND MANURE

Poultry litter and manure could contain RAM. It must not be used as stock feed or pasture fertiliser as it could potentially be grazed by ruminants.

Please visit us at our website:

www.nt.gov.au/d

© Northern Territory Government
ISSN 0157-8243
Serial No. 801
Agdex No. 420/653

Disclaimer: While all care has been taken to ensure that information contained in this document is true and correct at the time of publication, the Northern Territory of Australia gives no warranty or assurance, and makes no representation as to the accuracy of any information or advice contained in this publication, or that it is suitable for your intended use. No serious, business or investment decisions should be made in reliance on this information without obtaining independent and/or professional advice in relation to your particular situation.