

National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection

FSIS Update of the BSE Effort

Purpose

This briefing paper provides an update on the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Public Health efforts announced by the Secretary. FSIS implemented and is currently enforcing these initiatives. It also includes an overview of other initiatives directly related to BSE.

Background

On December 30, 2003, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman announced new policies that would further strengthen an existing solid food safety system against BSE. They included:

- An immediate ban to prevent all non-ambulatory disabled cattle from being used in the human food supply.
- Specified Risk Material - FSIS declared that skull, brain, trigeminal ganglia, eyes, vertebral column, spinal cord and dorsal root ganglia of cattle 30 months of age or older and the small intestine of all cattle are specified risk materials that are prohibited in the human food supply. Tonsils from all cattle are also not allowed in the human food supply.
- Advanced Meat Recovery – FSIS expanded a prior prohibition on spinal cord from being allowed in product produced from a technology called advanced meat recovery (AMR). This new regulation prohibits dorsal root ganglia, clusters of nerve cells connected to the spinal cord along the vertebral column, in addition to spinal cord tissue from AMR product.
- Air-Injection Stunning - FSIS banned the practice of air-injection stunning to ensure that portions of the brain are not dislocated into the tissues of the carcass as a consequence of humanely stunning cattle during the slaughter process.

Sample Collection

- FSIS also participates in the sample collection efforts for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)-enhanced BSE Surveillance Program. FSIS trained Public Health Veterinarians (PHVs) in collection of BSE samples to ensure that all animals condemned on ante-mortem at official establishments are sampled for BSE and that the samples are sent to an APHIS-designated lab.

- FSIS has played an important role in the enhanced surveillance effort. The effort, starting on June 1, 2004, has collected more than 350,000 samples from cattle.
- All samples have tested negative including the three inconclusives which were ruled out by the “Gold Standard” immunohistochemistry (IHC) test.

Transfer of Critical Information

- APHIS developed the BSE Surveillance Information System (BSE SIS), an intranet data system, to effectively gather and sort information on samples. FSIS collectors can now effectively use the BSE SIS to record critical information when samples are taken and send this information electronically to all affected parties. Labs can query the system to determine when samples were sent by collectors and collectors can know the status of their samples in the labs.
- FSIS Public Health Veterinarians at large bovine slaughter operations have completed computer-based training in BSE SIS.

Connectivity (“Getting Wired”)

- Prior to the enhanced surveillance effort, most of our personnel at the plant level were on dial-up internet connections. This created delays inputting extensive data for computer users in the field.
- FSIS has made great strides in connectivity by placing high-speed connections in more than 200 bovine slaughter establishments as part of the BSE surveillance effort.

e-ADRS (Electronic Animal Disposition Reporting System)

- In the winter of 2004, FSIS initiated a new data base called e-ADRS. This system enables PHVs in the field to record animal disposition data directly from the slaughter site on the day of slaughter.
- The e-ADRS and other data enhancements also provide improved data integration between FSIS and APHIS in the BSE surveillance initiative.

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