

July 31st, 2008

Commission Chairman Remark on the Current Status of Bovine
Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in Japan

Food Safety Commission
Cabinet Office
Government of Japan

1. Since a BSE-infected cow was confirmed in September 2001 in Japan, a variety of measures from public health and animal hygiene point of view have been strengthened.
 2. Three years later in October 2004, the Food Safety Commission received a request of assessment from the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In May 2005, the Food Safety Commission conducted a scientific, neutral and fair risk assessment concerning the health risks from the food. Based on the results, we determined that the risk in human would be limited to a very low degree of increase or no increase at all when the age of cattle subjected for BSE-testing at slaughterhouses was changed from blanket testing of all ages to 21 months or older.
 3. Following the completion of aforementioned assessment results, three years have passed since the age of cattle subjected for BSE testing at slaughterhouses was changed to 21-month-old/older as regulated by the Law on Special Measures against Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy. With the exception of one cow born immediately (in January 2002) after the feed ban implemented in October 2001[※]), no BSE-positive cow, including cattle aged 20 month-old or younger, has been confirmed so far among the cattle born since October 2001.
- ※) The amount of abnormal prion protein in the medulla oblongata (obex) detected using western blotting was found to be extremely small, about 1/500 or 1/1000, in comparison to other BSE-positive cattle.
4. The Commission has now compiled the report entitled “Current State of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in Japan” which includes data on the occurrence of BSE and the other data. I sincerely hope that these data will be informative when reviewing the countermeasures against BSE.