

(Reference) Outline of Report (Excerpts from Conclusion)

The conclusions described below 1. through 4. are in response to the inquiries made by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF).

1. Revision of current policy as to exempt cattle under a certain age from BSE testing conducted at slaughterhouses, and promotion of research and development of testing technology

Currently, all cattle that pass through slaughterhouses in Japan are tested for BSE. In order to estimate the impact supposing that the BSE testing policy will be revised from April 2005, so that only cattle aged 21 months and above will be subject to compulsory testing, a qualitative comparison was conducted between the following levels: the levels of BSE prion accumulation in live cattle and contamination in meat in case that cattle of all ages were tested and those in case that cattle of 21 months and above were tested. The results show that, the levels of BSE prion contamination of meat fall into the range of “negligible” to “very low.” Provisional estimates based on quantitative evaluation have also lead to a similar conclusion. From these results it can be concluded that the level of impact upon human health (in other words, the risk to humans) caused by the suspension of BSE testing to cattle over aged 21 months rises no higher than “very low.”

The recommendations regarding the promotion of research and development of testing technology will be focused in “4. Further promotion of BSE research studies.”

2. Ensuring complete removal of SRM

The removal of SRM is an essential measure that leads to the reduction of the risk of contracting vCJD for the people of Japan. Therefore, conducting regular surveys at slaughterhouses to verify compliance with measures for SRM management and implementation of appropriate methods to prevent contamination from SRMs, are effective ways to prevent such risks.

To further reduce the risk of BSE prion contamination of meat, it is essential to set concrete steps towards a total ban on pithing, and to implement these steps as soon as possible. As well as continually ensuring compliance with Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) on slaughtering methods, to prevent the dispersal of spinal cord tissue, it is important to verify the effectiveness of SRM management procedures. Although there is no currently available effective alternative technology to stunning, it is important that the implementation of effective alternatives be explored in the future.

3. Enhancing the enforcement of feed regulations

Requiring notification of the ingredients in imported compound feeds is an effective way of reducing the risk of cattle exposure to BSE prions. In order to verify the effectiveness of feed regulations, it is also important to strengthen the inspection and guidance systems with regard to feed importers, feed manufacturers, feed distributors and dealers, and cattle ranchers. Concrete objectives need to be established and achieved as soon as possible.

4. Promoting further BSE research studies

There is a definite need for the development of BSE testing methods with greater sensitivity. The MHLW and MAFF must make efforts to provide subjects, including younger cattle, for testing, as well as arranging for their transport and storage, particularly of BSE-positive cattle, in order to facilitate the implementation of BSE research. Any new data that are obtained will serve as an important resource for future risk assessments. Development of methods to assess the effectiveness of preventive measures against SRM contamination and other measures for avoiding risks should be promoted, as well as propelling research involving animal inoculation tests to elucidate, among other things, the mechanism involved in the accumulation of BSE prion. Furthermore, in addition to the basic research, research for the preparation of data essential for risk assessments should be promoted.