

This is a provisional English translation of an excerpt from the original full report.

Risk Assessment Report

Cattle meat and offal imported from Italy to Japan (Prions)

Food Safety Commission of Japan (FSCJ)
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ABSTRACT

FSCJ was requested by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) to conduct a risk assessment of cattle meat and offal imported from Italy. Using reference materials and documents submitted by the MHLW regarding the BSE situation in Italy, FSCJ assessed the risk of the BSE agent in cattle meat and offal from Italy in relation to such border measures as restriction of cattle age and definition of Specific Risk Materials (SRMs).

The assessment was based on the findings obtained through the former FSCJ's risk assessment of the BSE agent, the current situation of implementation of BSE control measures, and relating information on definition of SRMs and the situation of slaughtering processes. Thereby, FSCJ thoroughly assessed risks arisen from consumption of meat and offal derived from cattle born, raised, and slaughtered in Italy.

A large number of BSE cases have been reported in European countries, mainly in the United Kingdom (UK), with a peak in the early 1990s. According to relevant reports issued by World Health Organization (WHO) and other organizations, a possible link between variant Cruetzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) and BSE was first pointed out in 1996. Until October 2015, a total of 190,668 cases (as of the end of October) of BSE have been reported worldwide. The annual number peaked at 37,316 in 1992, but decreased remarkably to 21 in 2012, seven in 2013, 12 in 2014 and six in 2015 (as of the end of October), as a result of reinforced feed ban and other control measures. No cases of classical BSE have been confirmed among cattle born in the past 14 years since the time when the last one case was confirmed in the birth cohort of January 2001 in Italy.

The result of the risk assessment is summarized as follows.

Taking into account the situation of infection of cattle with the BSE agent, the risk of BSE, and the species barrier to BSE transmission between human and bovine, and assuming that the current risk management including the regulations for feed and others continues to be implemented, vCJD is highly unlikely to develop through consumption of meat and offal (excluding tonsils and distal ileum) derived from cattle born, raised, and slaughtered at the age of 30 months or younger in Italy.

Therefore, considering thoroughly available evidence, FSCJ reached the following conclusions on the restriction of cattle age and definition of Specific Risk Materials (SRMs) for meat and offal (excluding tonsils and distal ileum) derived from cattle born, raised, and slaughtered in Italy.

(1) Restriction of cattle age

As for the meat and offal imported from Italy, a difference between the following two border measures would be extremely small in the risk to human health. One is “the ban on import” and the other is setting the age threshold* for import at “30 months”. Therefore, the effect on human health of the change of the border measure from the former to the latter is negligible.

(2) Definition of SRMs

As for the meat and offal imported from Italy, a difference between the following two border measures would be extremely small in the risk to human health. One is “the ban on import” and the other is the import of the products containing no SRMs defined as “tonsils and ileum (limited to the part of two meters from the junction to the caecum) from all ages and head (excluding the tongue, cheek meat, hides/skins and tonsils), spinal cord and vertebral column from over 30 months age”. Therefore, the effect on human health of the change of the border measure from the former to the latter is negligible.

*Age threshold means the limit of age of cattle from which meat and offal are derived.