

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

Risk Assessment Report

Cattle meat and offal imported from the U.S.A., Canada, and Ireland 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 the U.S.A., Canada and Ireland. Using reference materials and documents submitted by the MHLW regarding the BSE situation in the three countries, FSCJ assessed the risk of BSE agent in cattle meat and offal in relation to such border measures as age limit of imports.

In the assessment, FSCJ examined potential variations of BSE risks to human health when the age limit on cattle meat and offal imported from the three countries is increased from the current 30 months of age in line with the international standards for mitigating BSE risks.

The number of cases of classical BSE worldwide has been decreasing, and few cases has been reported in recent years. As a result, “risks related to the prevalence of BSE in cattle” decreased significantly and has become a smaller portion of the overall risk. In addition, in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), which is the international standard, the age limit on trades of cattle meat and offal is not required. Based on these facts, FSCJ evaluated the likelihood of developing a variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) associated with consumption of classical BSE prions through cattle meat and offal (excluding SRMs) by implementing appropriate risk control measures related to slaughtering and meat processing such as removal of SRMs or ante-mortem inspection even after the age limit is removed. FSCJ also evaluated whether the above-mentioned risk control measures are appropriately implemented in the three countries as the precondition.

The results of the risk assessment are summarized below.

Among the three countries, indigenous classical BSE cases has not been confirmed in the U.S.A., and few cases of indigenous classical BSE is confirmed in Canada and Ireland at present. Thus, the control measures against “risks related to the prevalence of BSE in cattle” are considered to be effectively contributing toward preventing the incidence of classical BSE in these countries. Therefore, FSCJ presumes that the incidence of classical BSE will continue to be quite unlikely, or the incidence rate will continuously remain below the current level. Only extremely small amount of abnormal prion protein (PrP^{Sc}) is distributed in the tissues other than SRMs of the classical BSE infected cattle according to the data on prion distribution in the bodies

of the classical BSE-infected cattle and epidemiological information on vCJD cases. Therefore, only extremely small amount of PrP^{Sc} is assumed to be ingested through food by the removal of SRMs and additionally considering the fact that the cattle showing the clinical signs can be removed by appropriate ante-mortem inspection. FSCJ judges that the control measures regarding “risks related to slaughtering and meat processing” are appropriately implemented in the three countries.

Furthermore taking into account the interspecies barrier between human and bovine, FSCJ considers that vCJD is highly unlikely to develop in association with consumption of classical BSE prions through cattle meat and offal (excluding SRMs) imported from the three countries after the age limit is removed, assuming that current risk control measures are continuously implemented as mentioned above. For the atypical BSE, the previous assessment on “BSE counter measures applied to domestic cattle” has concluded that vCJD is highly unlikely to develop in association with consumption of classical BSE prions through cattle meat and offal (excluding SRMs) under the continuous implementation of current control measures against BSE, and new findings affecting this conclusion are not available.

Considering thoroughly available evidence, FSCJ reached the following conclusion on the risk of BSE agent in cattle meat and offal imported from the U.S.A., Canada and Ireland by increasing the age limit from the current 30 months of age in line with the international standards. FSCJ concludes that potential variations of BSE risks to human health by removing the age limit on cattle meat and offal (excluding SRMs) imported from the three countries in line with the international standards is negligible.

FSCJ drew this conclusion of the assessment assuming that current risk control measures are continuously implemented. Therefore, risk management organizations should continuously collect related information, particularly regarding feed regulation, surveillance, ante-mortem inspection of slaughter and control on SRM removal.