

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

Risk Assessment Report

Cattle meat and offal imported from Denmark and Austria to Japan (Prions)

Food Safety Commission of Japan (FSCJ)
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ABSTRACT

FSCJ conducted a bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk assessment of cattle meat and offal imported from Denmark and Austria in response to the request of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). Referring to publicly available documents as well as materials submitted by the MHLW on these countries, FSCJ discussed and evaluated BSE risks to human health regarding import of cattle meat and offal from Denmark and Austria, when the age limit on cattle meat and offal imported from the two countries is changed from the current 30 months of age to no limitation in line with the international standards for mitigating BSE risks.

The number of cases of classical BSE worldwide has been decreasing, and few cases have been reported in recent years. Consequently, “risks related to the prevalence of BSE prion in living cattle” decreased significantly and has become a smaller portion of the overall BSE risk. In OIE’s Terrestrial Animal Health Code, there is no age restriction for trading cattle meat and offal. Given these, FSCJ investigated terms of import of cattle meat and offal from Denmark and Austria, and studied whether the cases of a variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) which associated with consumption of classical BSE prions through intake of beef and offal (excluding SRMs) could be extremely low under no age restriction. The outcome will depend on appropriate risk control measures for meat processing such as removal of Specified Risk Material (SRM) or ante-mortem inspection even after the age limit is removed. FSCJ comprehensively evaluated whether inspection and risk management measures were appropriately implemented in these two countries.

The results of the risk assessment are summarized below.

Classical BSE has not been identified in Denmark in cattle born since March, 1999 nor in Austria in cattle born since June, 2000. Accordingly, it is deemed that the risk management measures in Denmark and Austria are effective to reduce the spread of classical BSE. FSCJ presumes that the incidence of classical BSE will be quite unlikely as long as those measures are maintained at the current level.

According to the data of prion distribution in the classical BSE-transmitted cattle and epidemiological information on vCJD cases, only small amount of abnormal prion protein (PrP^{Sc}) is detected in tissues

except SRM. In brief, considering appropriate inspection at slaughter will be able to eliminate cattle with clinical symptoms, it is presumed that the potential intake of PrP^{Sc} through food is subtle if SRM is removed. Thereby, FSCJ judges that the appropriate control measures at slaughtering and meat processing are taken in Denmark and Austria.

Taking into account the interspecies barrier between human and bovine¹ in addition to appropriate risk control measures, FSCJ considers the possibility to occur vCJD in association with consumption of classical BSE prions would be extremely low after allowing import of cattle meat and offal over 30 months of age at the time of slaughter from Denmark and Austria. Furthermore, FSCJ conducted a risk assessment in August 2016 regarding atypical BSE countermeasures applied to domestic cattle². It concluded that the possibility to occur prion disease including vCJD derived from atypical BSE prion through intake of cattle meat and offal (excluding SRMs) would be extremely low as long as the appropriate risk control measures could be taken, similar to a classical BSE disease. There are no new findings affecting this view.

Given the above, FSCJ concludes that BSE risks to human health would be negligible permitting import of cattle meat and offal (excluding SRMs) over 30 months of age at the time of slaughter from Denmark and Austria.

FSCJ drew this conclusion of the assessment assuming that current risk control measures are continuously implemented. Therefore, risk management organizations should continuously collect information, particularly relating to each country's feed regulation, surveillance, inspection at slaughter and SRM removal regulation.

¹ See "Cattle meat and offal imported from the U.S.A., Canada and Ireland to Japan", January 2019
https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/foodsafetyfscj/8/3/8_D-20-00019/article/-char/en

² See "Consideration of risk variations in Japan derived from proposed revision of the current countermeasures against BSE", August 2016
<http://www.fsc.go.jp/fsciis/attachedFile/download?retrievalId=kya20151218480&fileId=203>