

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

Risk Assessment Report

Meat and offal of cattle, goats and sheep imported from the United Kingdom 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 meat and offal of cattle, sheep and goats imported from the United Kingdom (UK). Using reference materials and documents submitted by the MHLW regarding the BSE situation in the UK, FSCJ assessed the risk of the BSE agent in cattle meat and offal from the UK in relation to such border measures as restriction of cattle age and definition of Specific Risk Materials (SRMs) as well as the risk of the BSE agent in goats and sheep in relation to border measures such as definition of 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, goats and sheep born, raised, and slaughtered in the UK.

A large number of BSE cases have been reported in European countries, mainly in the 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. BSE is classified into classical BSE and atypical BSE (L-type BSE and H-type BSE). Classical BSE is mainly transmitted through contaminated feed, while atypical BSE occurs sporadically.

Until 2017 (as of the end of November), a total of 190,678 cases of BSE have been reported worldwide. The annual number peaked at 37,316 in 1992, but decreased remarkably to three in 2015, one in 2016, and no cases of classical BSE have been confirmed in 2017 (as of the end of November), as a result of reinforced feed ban and other control measures. Only two goats were reported to be of infected with BSE prion among farmed sheep and goats. Infection with BSE prion has not been identified in sheep.

No cases of classical BSE have been confirmed among cattle born in the past 8 years since the time when the last one case was confirmed in the birth cohort of May 2009 in the UK. Only one goat, born before 1987 prior to the enforcement of feed regulation, was reported to be infected with BSE prion among farmed sheep

and goats tested retrospectively for BSE. Infection with BSE prion has not been identified in sheep.

The result of the risk assessment is summarized as follows.

① Cattle meat and offal

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 is continuously implemented, vCJD is highly unlikely to develop through consumption of meat and offal (excluding tonsils and distal ileum) derived from the cattle born, raised, and slaughtered at the age of 30 months or younger in the UK.

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 the cattle born, raised, and slaughtered in the UK.

(a) Restriction of cattle age

As for the meat and offal imported from the UK, 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.

(b) Definition of SRMs

As for the meat and offal imported from the UK, 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 that are 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 the cattle aged over 30 months”. 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.

② Meat and offal of goats and sheep

Considering the source and route of infection with the BSE agent as well as the finding of only two BSE cases identified in goats, one in France and the other in the UK after the enforcement of feed regulation, FSCJ concluded that feed regulation is extremely important in risk management for prevention of BSE in sheep and goats. Also taking into account the risk of infection of sheep and goats, vCJD is highly unlikely to develop through consumption of meat and offal derived from sheep and goats born and raised in the assessed countries, as far as the current risk management including the regulation for feed and others is successively implemented.

As for meat and offal of goats and sheep imported from the UK, 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 head (including tonsils but excluding tongue, cheek meat, hides/skins) and vertebrae column of the sheep and goats aged over 12 months as well as spleen and ileum of all ages. Therefore, the effect on human health of the change of the border measure from the former to the latter is negligible.