

Cattle feeding restrictions to prevent mad cow disease

(Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE))

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What is BSE?

BSE or 'mad cow disease' is a rare type of neurological disease in cattle caused by the accumulation of abnormal protein in the brain. It belongs to a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. BSE is a fatal disease which affects the central nervous system; there is no treatment or vaccine for the disease. BSE can be also transmitted to people who consume the meat and products of infected animals, where it can cause a fatal human version called variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). BSE has never been recorded in Australia.

How does BSE spread?

BSE spreads by feeding cattle contaminated meat and bone meal. When BSE was first detected in Europe in 1988, Australia banned the importation of cattle, embryos and meat and bone meal from infected countries. Fortunately, Australia has not imported meat and bone meal except from New Zealand, since 1986.

How does Australia keep free from BSE?

Australia, including the Northern Territory, enjoys a global reputation for being free of BSE. This status can only be assured if we continue to apply vigorous preventative measures complemented by an ongoing surveillance program meeting international standards.

Australian ruminant feed ban

Stock feed manufacturers, sellers of stock feed and livestock producers need to be mindful of the need to protect our BSE-free status by rigorous adherence to the ruminant feed ban and related legislation.

Australia has a ban on feeding restricted animal material (RAM) to ruminant animals, such as cattle, sheep and goats. RAM is any material taken from a vertebrate animal, other than tallow, gelatine, milk products or oils. It includes rendered products, such as blood meal, meat meal, meat and bone meal, fish meal, poultry meal, feather meal and compounded feeds made from these products. This is because the infective agent, which causes BSE, is not destroyed through heat rendering.



The Australian ruminant feed ban is compulsory under State and Territory laws. A comprehensive, risk-based compliance inspection program is undertaken by the Department of Primary Industry and Resources, which targets all sectors in the livestock feed chain, from renderers to stockfeed manufacturers, stockfeed resellers and end-users. If non-conformity is identified, corrective actions will be implemented. The ruminant feed ban activities ensure that if

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the disease agent that causes BSE is ever inadvertently introduced into Australia, it would not be able to establish a cycle of infection in Australian animals, or be transmitted to consumers.

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When buying stock feed for ruminants, including cattle, sheep, goats and deer, make sure that it does not contain RAM. Labels on stock feed containing RAM will carry the following statement:

**This product contains restricted animal material.
DO NOT FEED TO CATTLE, SHEEP, GOATS, DEER OR OTHER RUMINANTS**

If the product is suitable for ruminants the label will state:

THIS PRODUCT DOES NOT CONTAIN RESTRICTED ANIMAL MATERIAL

Unless the label clearly states that the feed is suitable, do not feed it to cattle, sheep, goats or other ruminants.



National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) Surveillance Program (NTSESP)

NTSESP supports trade by maintaining a TSE surveillance system, which is consistent with the World Organisation for Animal Health Terrestrial Animal Health Code, which assures all countries that import cattle, sheep and deer products from Australia, that Australia remains free of these diseases. Surveillance activities are both general and targeted.

The Australian BSE surveillance program involves the detailed examination of cattle with neurological signs, which could be consistent with TSE. These cattle are sampled at points throughout the production chain, with additional samples from fallen or casualty stock also tested each year. Samples (entire brain and other parts) from cattle in the NT are submitted to the Berrimah Veterinary Laboratory for TSE testing.

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