

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

April 2011

Further information on joint consultation by Defra, FSA and WAG on proposed changes to the BSE testing of cattle slaughtered for human consumption

All European Union (EU) Member States are required to carry out BSE testing of slaughtered cattle, fallen cattle and cattle suspected of being affected with BSE.

The BSE epidemic is declining. There were 11 BSE cases confirmed in Great Britain 2010, all detected in fallen cattle. Over 2 million healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption were tested for BSE in Great Britain from November 2005 to the end of 2010. Of these, only two cattle aged less than 72 months were diagnosed with BSE: one slaughtered in 2006 and one slaughtered in 2008. Further [statistical information on BSE](#) is available.

Defra is consulting on proposed changes to the testing of healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption for BSE. These changes are part of the [TSE Roadmap 2](#) which aims to maintain the high level of food safety whilst ensuring that measures which have successfully controlled BSE are proportionate to the current risk.

The [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#) has advised that the purpose of BSE testing in cattle in the EU is mainly to monitor the BSE epidemic and that prevention of human exposure to the BSE agent mainly relies on the removal of [specified risk material \(SRM\)](#).

Following EFSA's advice on the expected number of missed BSE cases, EU Member States have agreed changes to the BSE testing of healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption born in most Member States:

- From 1 July 2011, the UK and twenty-one other Member States will be allowed to raise the age threshold for BSE testing of all healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption from 48 to 72 months.
- From 1 January 2013, the UK and twenty-one other Member States will be allowed to test a sample of healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption aged over 72 months for BSE. The sample size will be agreed at a later date.

There are no proposals to change the BSE testing requirements for emergency slaughtered cattle, fallen cattle and cattle suspected of being affected with BSE.

Ministers will seek advice from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) before making any changes to BSE testing of cattle slaughtered for human consumption in England. The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) has provided independent advice to the FSA on the risks of the proposed changes in the UK.

The proposed change in July 2011 is estimated to reduce the number of BSE tests on healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption by approximately 134,000

tests (27%) per year saving the industry in England and Wales approximately £904,000 per year.