



FOOD
STANDARDS
AGENCY
SCOTLAND
Buidheann
Inbhe-Bidhe
an Alba

To: All Licensed Red Meat Abattoirs in Scotland
Copies: All other licensed slaughterhouses- for information
All Beef Assurance Scheme Members
Other Organisations on the attached list

20 December 2001

BSE TESTING OF CATTLE

1. I am writing to let you know about further BSE testing requirements that will be implemented on 7th January 2002. From that date, all abattoirs that slaughter cattle for human consumption will be expected to be able to facilitate this testing. This letter explains why this will be required and what it may entail for you.

Additional requirements

2. As part of an expanded BSE monitoring programme, which the Agency supports, the EU has introduced a requirement¹ for cattle that are considered most at risk of developing BSE to be tested for the disease when they are slaughtered, whether or not they are slaughtered for human consumption. This expands on the present requirements where under EU rules, Beef Assurance Scheme (BAS) cattle aged over 30 months at slaughter have been required to test negative for BSE before their meat can be released for human consumption².
3. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is responsible for epidemiological testing, including overall responsibility for TSE/BSE testing. Operations that affect licensed abattoirs are the responsibility of the FSA, and we are working with DEFRA, the Meat Hygiene Service, Scottish Agricultural College and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) to implement the expanded BSE monitoring programme in the UK.

¹ European Union Regulation (EC) 999/2001 of 22nd May 2001 "Laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies" and the amendment in Commission Regulation 1248/2001 of 22nd June 2001.

² Commission Regulation (EC) No 2777/2000 of 18th December as amended by the Regulations detailed below.

4. The 'at risk' cattle that will need to be tested are those aged between 24 and 30 months at slaughter. Because of the age pattern of BSE in this country, we believe that few animals will test positive for the disease. In respect of abattoirs slaughtering cattle for human consumption, testing will be required for:
 - a. any animal aged between 24 and 30 months that is found at *ante mortem* to be diseased or injured. The animal may or may not be accompanied by a declaration containing the information specified in Schedule 18 of the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1995, as amended.
 - b. any animal aged between 24 and 30 months slaughtered on farm that meets the conditions specified in the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1995, as amended, and is accompanied by a certificate in the form set out in Schedule 19 of those Regulations;

You may wish to be aware that outside abattoirs, Agriculture Departments are implementing a parallel EU requirement to test all fallen stock over 24 months for BSE. This applies mainly to cattle found dead on farm or in transit or animals not fit for human consumption which are slaughtered on farm and extends the current requirement to test fallen stock aged 30 months or more. Any bovine aged over 24 months which dies in transit to the slaughterhouse or in the lairage, which is not being processed for human consumption, will need to be notified to Animal Handling Facilities (AHF) Ltd under the fallen stock reporting arrangements. AHF will arrange for collection and delivery of the carcase to an incinerator site where it will be sampled for testing. No charge will be made for this service.

Arrangements for testing animals intended for human consumption

5. We are aiming to keep handling arrangements in abattoirs as simple as possible, while complying with EU testing requirements and other statutory provisions, and protecting public health. The arrangements for testing are intended to operate flexibly in order to accommodate the circumstances of individual abattoirs with the key requirements being that:
 - a. the test sample is obtained safely and reliably;
 - b. the test result is obtained quickly;
 - c. steps are taken to guard against the possibility of contamination from an animal that is being tested for BSE;
 - d. retained parts of any tested animals not required are disposed of as specified risk material immediately after slaughter;
 - e. no part of the tested animal is released for human consumption until a negative test result is obtained;
 - f. all parts of any animal that tests positive for BSE are disposed of as specified risk materials;

We intend instructing the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) to enforce the arrangements set out in the attached guidance from 7th January 2002 (detailed instructions are in preparation).

6. In each plant, the OVS will discuss and agree upon local arrangements to undertake this testing. They are being sent a copy of this letter as prior warning of this requirement and will have received detailed instructions by 7 January.

Costs

7. The costs associated with conducting the BSE test (MHS enforcement, transport of heads, analysis of samples) will be paid by DEFRA. In addition DEFRA will pay compensation for any animal which tests positive for BSE.

Disposal of blood

8. You will wish to note that if blood from a tested animal is pooled with blood from 'normal kill' animals it would **all** have to be retained until a negative test result is received. If the test result is positive it will **all** need to be disposed of as SRM **at your expense**. You may, if you wish, dispose of pooled blood immediately as SRM (i.e. you don't need to wait for the test result), again **at your expense**. To minimise this cost, it may be in your interest to collect the blood separately from tested cattle, which may require special arrangements when they are bled out.

Beef Assurance Scheme (BAS) cattle

9. We are continuing to advise BAS members that, when applying for a slaughter certificate (BAS 6), sufficient notice must be given to abattoirs to ensure the testing arrangements work smoothly with minimum disruption. The ideal is at least 7 working days notice.
10. We are aware that some abattoirs have been declining to slaughter BAS cattle that need to be tested because of the procedures for handling testing. **All abattoirs now need to consider arrangements for handling BSE testing of casualty animals as set out above.** Please let me know if your plant will now accept over 30 month BAS cattle for slaughter and testing from 7th January. I enclose a reply slip for this purpose and would intend pass this information to BAS members.

Queries

11. Please let me know if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully,

Dr C Ferguson
FSA Scotland

BSE TESTING REQUIREMENTS: CATTLE SLAUGHTERED IN LICENSED ABATTOIRS

Introduction

1. 'At risk' 24 – 30 month cattle and all cattle aged over 30 months old (OTM) at slaughter must test negative for BSE before being released for human consumption. All parts of any animal that tests positive for BSE must be destroyed as SRM.
2. OTM Beef Assurance Scheme cattle may be slaughtered for human consumption up to the age of 42 months provided they are accompanied by a Slaughter Certificate issued by a Divisional Veterinary Manager of the State Veterinary Service (form BAS 6).

Handling of tested cattle

3. The risk of any 24 –30 month or BAS OTM animal testing positive for BSE is very low but no part of it must be released for human consumption, or for another purpose, until a negative test result is obtained.
4. The carcass and all other parts of the animal that are not disposed of as SRM, including the hide and blood, must be retained separately under the supervision of the OVS pending the result of the BSE test.
5. SRM must be stained and disposed of in the normal way. Any part of the animal that is not required by the owner, such as the blood or offal, may be disposed of as SRM **at the expense of the abattoir operator**. Where the blood of the tested animal cannot be collected separately and is allowed to collect in the blood tank, the whole contents must either be retained pending the test result or may be consigned immediately as SRM **at the expense of the abattoir operator**. Retained blood may be disposed of in the normal way if the test result is negative, but if the result is positive it must be consigned as SRM **at the expense of the abattoir operator**.
6. The carcass, (together with any meat and by products not disposed of as SRM) must be securely detained under the supervision of the MHS pending the test result. The MHS will not apply health marks to the meat until a negative test result is obtained. In the unlikely event that an animal tests positive the carcass, meat and by products must be disposed of as SRM
7. The precise arrangements for each abattoir need to be agreed by the operator and the OVS.

Testing arrangements

8. The entire head of the animal will be sent by the OVS to the nearest laboratory of the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) where a brain sample will be taken and sent for analysis. **Heads received by SAC before 2.30 p.m. will be processed that day, enabling the sample for analysis to reach the testing laboratory in Newcastle the following day. Heads must on no account arrive later than 4.30pm.** The arrangements for despatching heads must be confirmed with the SAC. The OVS will let you know the time by which the head needs to be ready for the carrier (TNT) to take it to the laboratory. In remote areas and the islands special transport arrangements will need to be considered.
9. In the event that heads cannot be despatched to arrive at SAC by 4.30 p.m. then the abattoir operator will need to make appropriate chiller facilities available, for the storage of the head boxes containing the packaged head samples, until it can be transported to the laboratory.
10. As long as the head is received by 2.30 p.m., the laboratory will send a brain sample for analysis to arrive at the testing laboratory in Newcastle the following morning. Following analysis of the sample, the test result will be notified to the OVS by fax. This is expected to take between 2 and 5 working days.

Carcase Storage

11. The tested carcase meat and by products must be stored in detained facilities under control of the OVS pending the test result. Where the detained facility is part of a normal chiller, the existing separation arrangements should be adequate. Where detained facilities are being used to detain carcasses and offal for other reasons, spatial separation should be provided between those carcasses and offal and the carcasses meat and by products waiting test results.

Avoidance of cross-contamination

12. In order to comply with Council Regulation 1248/2001, the carcasses of the animal slaughtered just before and the two animals slaughtered immediately after the tested animal may need to be retained. In practice **this only applies in respect of BAS OTM cattle at abattoirs that cannot adequately reduce the risk of cross-contamination in other ways** (the requirement to separately slaughter 24-30 month 'at risk' animals adequately prevents cross-contamination). You are strongly advised to discuss suitable means to sufficiently reduce the risk cross-contamination with your OVS.
13. **The 'one before'**. The carcase of this animal may become contaminated if it touches the carcase of the tested animal during processing. Contamination is unlikely to occur if the tested animal is the first of the day to be slaughtered or if the carcasses are kept sufficiently far apart during processing.

14. **The 'two after'**. These carcasses may become contaminated by the carcass splitting saw.

This contamination is unlikely to occur if:

- the tested animal is the last of the day to be slaughtered or if the carcasses are kept sufficiently far apart during processing; and
- the equipment, particularly the carcass splitting saw, is thoroughly cleaned immediately after processing the tested animal (or if separate equipment is used).

15. The precise arrangements for each abattoir need to be agreed by the operator and the OVS.

**Food Standards Agency
December 2001**

BSE TESTING OF BEEF ASSURANCE SCHEME (BAS) CATTLE

From

Name and address of abattoir:

Licence Number:

I confirm that the above abattoir:

will slaughter over 30 month BAS cattle for human consumption.

I would appreciate the following information to enable me to decide whether to slaughter over 30 month BAS cattle for human consumption.

Signed.....

Date

Name (please print)

Position in company

Please return to:

Mr Mark Scott
Food Standards Agency Scotland
St. Magnus House, 25 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB11 6NJ
Fax: 01224 285 168 e-mail: Mark.Scott@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

All Scottish Abattoirs
All Scottish Local Authorities (by email only)
All Scottish Beef Assurance Scheme members
British Veterinary Association (Scottish Branch)
CoSLA (by email only)
Glasgow Vet School
Health and Safety Executive (Scotland)
Independent Farming Group
LACOTS
McSweens
Meat and Livestock Commission (Scotland)
Mr David Brimms
Mr Martin Prentice (by email)
NFUS
Quality Meat Scotland
Royal (Dick) Veterinary College
Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland
Food Science Division, SAC
Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers
Scottish Beef Council
Scottish Centre for Inspection and Environmental Health
Scottish Consumer Council
Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Associations
Scottish Grocers Federation
Scottish Landowners Federation
Scottish Meat Industry Liaison Group
Scottish Retail Consortium
Scottish Sheep Breed Societies
Wholesale Grocer's Association