

# SMA

# InfoMeat

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## USDA Releases BSE Prevalence for U.S.

Last week Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns announced USDA's estimate of the prevalence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in the United States. "We can now say, based on science, that the prevalence of BSE in the United States is extraordinarily low. The testing and analysis reinforce our confidence in the health of the U.S. cattle herd, while our interlocking safeguards, including the removal of specified risk materials and the feed ban, protect animal and human health," said Johanns. The estimate of BSE prevalence in the United States is based on data gathered from both the enhanced surveillance effort that has been underway since June 2004, and surveillance conducted in the U.S. for 5 years prior. USDA experts used two different methods, the BSurVE Prevalence B method and the Bayesian birth-cohort method, to analyze the prevalence of BSE based on all of the surveillance data. The findings of the two methods were similar, indicating that the most likely number of cases present in the U.S. is between 4 and 7 animals. Therefore, USDA concludes that the prevalence of the disease in the United States is less than 1 case per million adult cattle, based on an adult cattle population in this country of 42 million animals. The system of interlocking safeguards protects animal and public health. The most important safeguards are the removal of specified risk materials from the food supply, along with the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) 1997 ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban. Science indicates that the longer the feed ban is in place, the lower the prevalence of BSE will be in this country. USDA will use the prevalence analysis, once it is peer-reviewed, and international standards set by the World Animal Health Organization, to design an ongoing BSE surveillance program for the United States. The data and analysis will also assist in making science-based policy and regulatory decisions related to the disease. USDA is providing its analysis to outside experts for a scientific peer review and making it available to the public. USDA is confident the conclusions drawn regarding BSE prevalence in the United States are sound and scientifically credible. The analysis, along with a summary report on the BSE enhanced surveillance program, is available at [www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot\\_issues/bse.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/bse.shtml).

## Russia Bans All Poultry Imports

According to an *Associated Press* report, Russia's Agriculture Ministry has banned all imports of poultry and poultry products. The ministry reportedly said it had withdrawn all permission for imports this year as of April 27, as a response to shippers not complying with documentation requirements and violations of product storage mandates. It is not yet known how long the ban will be in place, but *Interfax* news agency quoted Agriculture Minister Alexei Gordeyev as saying, "It is a technical issue, and I believe that it will be solved quickly, within 10 days to two weeks." The announcement came one week after hundreds from Russia's poultry producers' union protested at Russia's Trade and Economic Ministry, demanding that poultry imports be limited to protect domestic production levels. The ministry reportedly cited instances of products being offloaded without import permission, discrepancies between shipments and accompanying documents, the discovery of fake products, non-compliance with regulations on storing raw meat, and attempts to use counterfeit inspection. No countries were singled out in the ministry's statement. As the largest market for U.S. poultry exports, news of the ban was blamed for slumping share prices among several publicly traded U.S. poultry companies. "Our hope is it is not a big deal," said Bill Roenigk, spokesman for the National Chicken Council in Washington, D.C. "They have cut off all countries shipping poultry to them and they claim it is due to an alleged paperwork violation." (*MeatPoultry.com*, 4/27/06)

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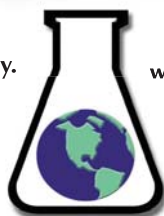
## New Treatment Reduces Pathogens in Meat

A mixture of lactic acid bacteria shown to reduce foodborne pathogens such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli* O157:H7 in processed beef and poultry by as much as 99.99% has passed GRAS (generally recognized as safe) status review by the Food and Drug Administration. The mixture, to be sold under the name Bovamine Meat Cultures™, is one of the few post-production treatments available that protects meat and poultry during long-term storage. Administered during the processing phase, it works with other interventions throughout the beef production chain to provide an added layer of protection for consumers. The treatment was developed through Texas Tech University, with research funded by the Beef Checkoff Program, the Texas Beef Council and Nutrition Physiology Corp, the Indianapolis-based firm that will market the product. The development of the mixture of lactic acid bacteria was led by Dr. Mindy Brashears, associate professor and director of the International Center for Food Industry Excellence at Texas Tech. Brashears' study on the combined bacteria was previously published in the *Journal of Food Safety*. Tested under conditions simulating meat storage and transfer to and from supermarkets, the product was found to reduce *Salmonella* by 99.9% and *E. coli* O157:H7 by 99%. In addition, the cultures were put through a battery of both subjective and objective taste tests and were shown to have no impact on flavor. "Lactic acid bacteria are considered good bacteria in that they have a lot of benefits," Brashears said. "They are used to make several products like cheese, yogurt and sausages. They have a place in nature and they compete with other bacteria by producing compounds that kill the other bacteria. That is where the concept of using these bacteria to actually reduce foodborne pathogens came from. It is not a new concept, but some of the applications we have developed are unique." Meat and poultry products containing this mixture will be labeled to reflect the lactic acid cultures used to reduce foodborne pathogens.

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## Grassley Supports Creekstone on BSE Testing

Senate Finance Chairman Charles Grassley (R-IA) recently announced plans to send a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture urging the agency to change its policy prohibiting meat packers and processors from conducting post-mortem bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) tests on all their cattle. "What we're talking about here is letting packers go above and beyond" the USDA standard, Grassley said during an April 25 call with Iowa agriculture reporters. "If processors want to go above and beyond, they ought to be able to." Creekstone Farms, of Arkansas City, KS, filed a suit last month in U.S. District Court against USDA for refusing to allow the company to voluntarily test all its cattle. According to Creekstone Farms complaint, USDA would not supply Creekstone with the additional testing kits. Although Grassley agreed that he does not believe that 100% testing by processors is necessary, he said that he supports their right to do so. Conversely, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns told North American agriculture reporters earlier this month that allowing companies to conduct full testing would be putting "a stamp of approval" on a practice that is inconsistent with U.S. demands that trading partners not require such testing. Johanns stressed that no international standards require 100% testing and the U.S. has been calling on trading partners to adopt international standards. Johanns also argued that there is no scientific or food safety value in such BSE testing since BSE does not show up in tests on cattle under 30 months old, such as those processed by Creekstone Farms. USDA only requires testing of high-risk cattle, such as downer or dying cattle.

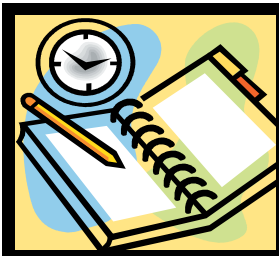
### Briefly . . .

APHIS Authorizes Funding for NAIS Field Trials: In a meeting with industry last week, FSIS Administrator Dr. Barbara Masters reminded everyone that the agency is no longer just focusing on "clean-up to clean-up" when considering how much product is implicated by a positive pathogen finding, especially for raw products. Specifically, the agency looks more toward the raw materials that went into the product testing positive. As reminder to our members, SMA has two guidance documents available for your assistance. Links to both documents are on the front page of our website at [www.southwestmeat.org](http://www.southwestmeat.org).

FSIS Offers Clarification on Donating Product: FSIS Notice 26-06, which outlines agency policy on donated products, is not specifically clear on whether establishments donating misbranded product must notify the recipient how the product is misbranded and must ship the product to the recipient under seal. However, FSIS' Labeling and Consumer Protection staff clarified that companies donating any misbranded products to charities should provide a letter of disclosure to the charity regarding the specifics on why such products have to be labeled as "not for sale." That letter is part of the supporting document for temporary approval. In addition, the misbranded products are shipped under company seal as a further means to control the destination of the misbranded product.

Packers Close for Immigration Work Boycott: Many beef packers and poultry processors will be closed today due to a nationwide immigrant work boycott. Immigrant workers across the country were urged by their leaders to boycott work, school, and shopping in order to demonstrate their collective economic importance. Gary Mickelson of Tyson Foods said many of their 100 U.S. food processing plants will be up and running, but there will be some disruptions from the protests. Tyson will have five of nine beef plants, and four of six pork plants, closed. Cargill said all five of its beef processing plants and two of its pork plants will be closed as well. Swift will be dark at two pork plants and five of its beef plants, and several other packers will have one or two plants with limited operations. Sanderson Farms reported that they offered workers the option of working a Saturday shift in order to be off today in support of immigrant labor.

South Korea Closer to Resuming U.S. Beef Imports: Last week the South Korean Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry confirmed that the latest U.S. case of BSE occurred in a cow born before the FDA's ruminant feed ban. A South Korean inspection team verified the cow's age after examining the carcass, and four teams will arrive this week to begin reviewing 36 U.S. slaughter facilities and packing houses. Their reports will hopefully be favorable to re-opening trade for U.S. beef, possibly as early as June.



### Register now for "Developing & Implementing HACCP Plans for the Meat Industry"

to be held at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, June 6-8, 2006, hosted by SMA and the Texas A&M Department of Animal Science. Registration forms are available on our website, or by contacting the SMA office.

**Sign up today!**