

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS NOTICE

50-04

10/7/2004

BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (BSE): ISSUES RELATING TO TONSILS AND BRAIN COLLECTION

FSIS is issuing this notice to clarify which practices are acceptable for removing tonsils from cattle for purposes of 9 CFR 310.22, the regulations that prescribe requirements for the removal, segregation, and disposition of specified risk materials (SRMs). Also, this notice clarifies the notification protocol related to the off-site collection of brain samples for BSE testing described in FSIS Notice 33-04.

Tonsils

The regulations in 9 CFR 310.22 require that establishments develop, implement, and maintain written procedures for the removal, segregation, and disposition of SRMs, and that they incorporate these procedures into their food safety systems (i.e., HACCP plans or Sanitation SOPs or other prerequisite programs). Under 9 CFR 310.22, the tonsils from cattle of all ages are among the materials designated as SRMs. As described in FSIS Notice 9-04, inspection program personnel are to verify that all SRMs are completely removed from the carcasses of cattle, segregated from edible tissue, and disposed of as inedible.

When FSIS designated the tonsils of all cattle as SRMs, it was not FSIS' intention to have establishments modify their existing practices for properly removing bovine tonsils. In the preamble to 9 CFR 310.22, FSIS stated that tonsils of all livestock species, including cattle, were already required to be removed and were prohibited for use as ingredients in meat food products under 9 CFR 318.6(b)(6). The accepted practice for removing the tonsils from livestock has been to remove all visible tonsils. In cattle, this includes separation of the palatine tonsils and lingual tonsils from the tongue (in establishments that harvest the tongue for human food) by a transverse cut caudal (just behind) the last vallate papillae. During accepted head dressing procedures, tongues are removed with associated tissues including lymph nodes, fatty tissues, salivary glands and tonsils (i.e., palatine and lingual tonsils). FSIS is not aware of any new evidence that would require a change in its accepted practice. FSIS expected that establishments would continue to remove tonsils from cattle in accordance with the procedures that they had implemented to comply with 9 CFR 318.6(b)(6), and, in addition, they would incorporate their procedures for the removal, segregation, and disposition of tonsils into their food safety systems. Establishments that slaughter cattle should have been following these practices before

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tonsils were designated as SRMs.

INSPECTION PROGRAM PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES

Inspection program personnel are to verify that the establishment's procedures for the removal, segregation, and disposition of tonsils include:

1) accepted head dressing procedures are followed including removal of the tongue and its associated lymph nodes, visible tonsils (palatine and lingual), fatty tissues and salivary glands, and

2) for those establishments that harvest the tongue for human food, removal of edible tongue is accomplished by making a transverse cut caudal (just behind) the last vallate papillae.

If an establishment does not have such procedures in place, or fails to execute such procedures, FSIS inspection program personnel are to take the appropriate action as set out in FSIS Notice 9-04 and FSIS Directive 5000.1, Revision 1.

NOTE: Additional information and diagrams on the location of the tonsils are posted on the FSIS Technical Service Center (TSC) web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/ofotsc/

Off Site Collection of Brain Samples for BSE Testing

FSIS Notice 33-04, "Compliance and Investigations Division (CID) Protocol for Off-Site Collection of Brain Samples for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Testing," issued on June 14, 2004, provides the protocol for CID inquiries related to the collection of brain samples for BSE testing of bovine animals that were "U.S. Condemned" on antemortem inspection at federally-inspected establishments and that are moved from the federally-inspected establishment to an off-site sample collection location (See also FSIS Notice 28-04 and 29-04).

PROGRAM PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES

A. FSIS Public Health Veterinarian (PHV)

When an animal is condemned for signs of a Central Nervous System (CNS) disorder at a federally-inspected establishment that has made arrangements through the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) to test for BSE at an off-site sample location, the PHV is to:

1) immediately notify, through supervisory channels, the Office of Program Evaluation and Enforcement Review (OPEER), Regional Manager (RM), of the CNS condemnation, and

2) provide the RM with the date of condemnation, and the establishment number where the animal was condemned.

B. Regional Manager

When the OPEER RM has been notified of a CNS condemned animal, he or she is to verify:

- 1) that the carcass was received at the off-site location, and
- 2) that a brain sample for BSE testing was collected by APHIS.

The RM should document this activity in accordance with established procedures.

/s/ Philip S. Derfler

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