

Ban on feeding ruminant fat to ruminants is to be upheld in Germany

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A closed meeting on the subject of BSE at the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI) responsible for animal epidemics was held on the island of Riems, in which the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) also participated. The participants agreed that, from the scientific angle, no fat from ruminants should be fed to ruminants in future. Only when suitable methods and systems in production and marketing can guarantee that feed for cattle, sheep and goats does not contain any fat from their own species and thus cross contaminations can be ruled out, could feed with fat from other species be fed again to ruminants.

In the opinion of BfR and FLI the currently available slaughter techniques are not able to extract ruminant fats without any nerve tissue and are not, therefore, definitely free of BSE. In the case of BSE-infected cattle, the peripheral nervous tissue may contain the pathogen without it being discovered by the rapid BSE test for brainstem material. In particular the milk exchangers used as a milk substitute for calves constitute a potential BSE infection risk as the use of gently heated fats is recommended for their production. This does not inactivate the BSE pathogen. The feeding of animal fats to the same species of animals is rejected by BfR and FLI in principle.

In the run-up to the closed meeting other changes relating to safety measures for the protection of consumers from BSE were discussed. This prompted BfR and FLI to reaffirm their position on the protection measures in place. Both institutes reject a loosening of the protection measures after determining BSE in the slaughterhouse. Furthermore, all slaughter cattle from the age of 30 months upwards should continue to be tested for the BSE pathogen and any changes to this routine test should be examined at the earliest in 2008. Only then can a reassessment of the situation be undertaken as that is when the average incubation period for BSE of 5-6 years is over in conjunction with the ban on the feeding of animal fats and proteins that was fully implemented at the latest in 2002. At the present time, BfR and FLI also reject the raising of the age limit for the removal of specified risk material (SRM). In principle, it can be said that consumers can only be protected from BSE infection by keeping the pathogen out of the food chain.

The full version of the BfR Opinion in German is available on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/verfuetterungsverbot_von_wiederkaeuerfetten_an_wiederkaeuer_soll_in_deutschland_bestehen_bleiben.pdf