

What you need to know about BSE

About the finding:

- Today, July 18, 2017, USDA announced the finding of an atypical case of *Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy* (BSE), in an 11 year-old cow in Alabama. The case was detected at a livestock market in Alabama and at no time did this case present a risk to the food supply, or to human health.
- This case of BSE was confirmed by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) as an atypical (L-type) BSE case of the disease.
- The animal was showing clinical signs of BSE and was found through routine surveillance, confirming that USDA's interlocking safeguards and measures are working.
- This animal is the fifth case of BSE identified in the United States. Of the four previous U.S. cases, the first was a case of classical BSE that was imported from Canada; the rest have been atypical (H- or L-type) BSE.

General BSE Talking Points

- BSE is not contagious and exists in two types - classical and atypical. Classical BSE is the form that occurred primarily in the United Kingdom, beginning in the late 1980s, and it has been linked to variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) in people.
- Atypical BSE is different than classical cases of the disease. Atypical BSE generally occurs in older animals, generally eight years of age or greater. Researchers believe that that atypical cases of BSE arise rarely and spontaneously in all cattle populations.
- The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) has recognized the United States as negligible risk for BSE. As noted in the OIE guidelines for determining this status, atypical BSE cases do not impact official BSE risk status recognition as this form of the disease is believed to occur spontaneously in all cattle populations at a very low rate.
- According to USDA, this finding of an atypical case will not change the negligible risk status of the United States, and should not lead to any trade disruption.

Interlocking Safeguards and BSE Surveillance

- USDA's surveillance strategy is to focus on the targeted populations where we are most likely to find disease if it is present. This is the most effective way to meet both OIE and domestic surveillance standards. After completing enhanced surveillance in 2006 and

confirming that BSE prevalence was very low in the United States, USDA's surveillance program is now designed to detect one BSE case in one million adult cattle with 95 percent confidence. This goal exceeds the standard required by OIE.

- The primary source of infection for classical BSE is feed contaminated with the infectious prion agent, such as meat-and-bone meal containing protein derived from rendered infected cattle. Regulations from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have prohibited the inclusion of mammalian protein in feed for cattle and other ruminants since 1997 and have also prohibited high risk tissue materials in all animal feed since 2009.
- In addition to a stringent feed ban imposed by the Food and Drug Administration in 1997 as well as the removal of all specified risk material which could harbor BSE, USDA has a strong surveillance program in place to detect signs of BSE in cattle in the United States.