

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

JAMES R. BARBEE
Director



Las Vegas Office:
2300 McLeod Street
Las Vegas NV 89104-4314
(702) 668-4590
Fax (702) 668-4567

Nevada Department of Agriculture
Sparks Headquarters & Laboratory
405 South 21st Street
Sparks, Nevada 89431
(775)353-3601

Elko Office:
4780 E. Idaho Street
Elko NV 89801-4672
(775) 738-8076
Fax (775) 738-2639

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For More information contact Dr. Anette Rink/775-353-3700

Dr. Phil LaRussa, Nevada State Veterinarian and administrator stated: "National disease surveillance is a federal and state partnership and assures a safe and stable food supply. Consumers can be sure that animal products are safe and surveillance and testing in the United States is cutting edge."

BSE Found in Central California cow

Today the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) reported the laboratory confirmation of the nation's fourth case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in a dairy cow from central California. The carcass did not enter the food chain and there is currently no scientific evidence that BSE is transmitted through the milk. This finding does not present a risk to the food supply or public health. The sample was tested at the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa and has now been forwarded for confirmation to international animal health reference laboratories in Canada and England, which serve as official World Animal Health (OIE) reference labs.

The USDA has banned specified risk materials, or SRMs, from entering the food supply; since those are the parts of slaughter animals which are most likely to contain the BSE agent. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) ban on ruminant material in cattle feed prevents the spread of this disease in the cattle herd. USDA's surveillance is in line with world wide surveillance which led to a reduction of cases reported internationally. In 2011, only 29 cases of BSE were reported world wide which represents a 99% reduction since the peak in 1992 of 37,311 cases. USDA will be conducting a complete epidemiological investigation in conjunction with California animal and public health officials and the FDA.

BSE is a progressive neurological disease in cattle which is always fatal and belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Affected animals show clinical symptoms including nervousness, aggression, abnormal posture, in-coordination, decreased milk production, and loss of body condition.

According to a USDA press release from USDA earlier today: "This detection in no way affects the United States' BSE status as determined by the OIE. The United States has in place all of the elements of a system that OIE has determined ensures that beef and beef products are safe for human consumption: a mammalian feed ban, removal of specified risk materials, and vigorous surveillance. Consequently, this detection should not affect U.S. trade. USDA remains confident in the health of the national herd and the safety of beef and dairy products. As the epidemiological investigation progresses, USDA will continue to communicate findings in a timely and transparent manner."