

## Mad-cow found in animal born after feed ban

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Another case of mad-cow disease has been detected in Canadian cattle - this time in an animal born 2 1/2 years after a ban on feed that was believed to be the source of the devastating neurological disease.

Although the long lag time between the ban and the cow's birth is "notable," officials with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency said the discovery of a new case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy is neither surprising nor worrisome.

"This case is unwelcome but not unexpected," Dr. Brian Evans, chief veterinarian at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, said in a teleconference from Edmonton.

He said he did not expect any retaliatory trade measures as a result of the new case of BSE, the fourth case since May of 2003.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns seemed to confirm that, saying in a statement that there were no immediate plans to limit imports of beef or cattle from Canada. But he added that the United States "will continue to evaluate this situation as the investigation continues."

The United States banned most trade in Canadian beef and cattle from May of 2003 until July of 2005, a policy that had a dire impact on the Canadian beef industry. The BSE crisis is believed to have cost the beef industry more than \$7-billion.

Doug Horner, Alberta's Agriculture Minister, stressed that the infected cow did not enter the food supply so there is no risk to consumers.

"Obviously, everybody tenses up when you get a positive," he said yesterday from Edmonton. "But Alberta and Canadian beef is perfectly safe. This is not a food-safety issue at all."



The latest case of BSE was detected on Jan. 16 on a farm in central Alberta. The cow, a Holstein-Hereford cross, was killed and its brain tested for BSE at the provincial lab. A confirmatory test was conducted in Jan. 18 at the federal lab, and the results came Sunday night.

The infected cow was 69 months old, meaning it was born in April of 2000. That is 32 months after the feed ban, which outlawed the use of feed that contained the ground remains of cows and other ruminants.

The three previous BSE cases in Canada were two cattle born before the August, 1997, feed ban and one born in March of 1998.

Dr. Evans of the CFIA said that all potentially contaminated feed did not disappear immediately after the 1997 ban; trace amounts could have lingered for years in feed bins.

As little as one milligram of contaminated feed could cause BSE, he said.

Dr. Evans said the feed ban is working. "If the feed ban was not working, we would have more numbers with the disease and more younger-aged animals," he said.

Dr. Evans said he is confident that BSE will be eradicated, and the new case does not compromise that goal in any way. "On the path to BSE freedom, a few cases are inevitable," he said.

There are about six million head of cattle in Canada over 24 months old. Because of the incubation period, it is highly unlikely that a cow will develop BSE before three years of age.

While it is theoretically possible for a heifer to pass on BSE to her calf, there is little evidence it has happened. As a precautionary measure, the CFIA is tracking the calves of the infected cow, and will destroy them.

Cattle born on the farm 12 months before and 12 months after the infected animal are being tracked, as well as the cow's two most recently born offspring. Feed purchases, records and storage methods are also being reviewed, Dr. Evans said.

Last year, there were almost 400 cases of BSE in cattle worldwide, down from a high of 38,000.