



Testing for Mad Cow disease: France has the most stringent BSE testing program in the world. *Paul Workman reports ...*

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PETER MANSBRIDGE (Anchor): Ottawa plans to spend 92 million dollars over the next five years to protect Canada's beef industry. The money will go towards increasing the number of cows tested for BSE. Agriculture Minister Bob Speller said Canada will be able to test 8,000 cattle this year. With the new money that number is eventually expected to reach 30,000 a year.

But even that kind of cash won't buy us what France has; the most stringent testing program in the world. France weathered its own mad cow crisis and worked hard to woo back consumers. Now, French meat eaters always know exactly where the beef's been. Paul Workman reports.

PAUL WORKMAN (Reporter): Thousands of beef shanks, beef quarters, beef carcasses move out of this wholesale market every day. It's a bit like an airport. Slabs of beef coming and going, each with its own passport, stamped, labelled and registered, tracking every animal's birth, death and the journey in between. It's what the French call traceability, a system put in place after the first mad cow scare in 1996. "Everything you see on the carcass appears on the bill we give to our clients," says the manger. Such as, country of origin, which farm, where and when it was slaughtered and above all, tested for mad cow disease. In France every animal more than two years old is automatically tested. Every animal. More than three million last year. Compare that with 5,500 in Canada or 20,000 in the United States out of 37 million cattle slaughtered there.

ISABELLE CHMITELIN (Chief Veterinarian of France): The confidence of the consumer is the most important indication about the efficientness of a system. I think that the French consumer is quite happy with the system we've put in place since 2000.

WORKMAN: In Canada one case of mad cow disease causes widespread panic. In France last year they found 137 cases with little or no adverse reaction. The butcher here says as far as he's concerned the mad cow crisis in France is over. Beef sales are back up, he says, and consumers are no longer afraid to buy his steaks and pot roasts. Remember, just three years ago beef sales in France dropped 40 per cent. That's when universal testing was introduced, and gradually consumers regained their confidence.

French officials say their system is by no means a hundred per cent foolproof, a hundred per cent guaranteed against mad cow disease. But, they say, it's among the best anywhere.

Paul Workman, CBC News, Paris.