

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dame Sally C Davies



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Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

Tel: +44 (0)20 7210 5150-4  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7210 5407

Sally.Davies@dh.gsi.gov.uk  
[www.dh.gov.uk/cmo](http://www.dh.gov.uk/cmo)

Mr Tim J Smith  
Chief Executive  
Food Standards Agency  
Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6NH

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sally C Davies'.

## **BSE TESTING**

Thank you for your letter of 19 April 2011 giving me, and the other UK Chief Medical Officers, the opportunity to comment on your proposals recommending that the FSA board agree to:

a move to testing healthy slaughter cattle at 72 months; and

that it would be acceptable in principle to move to testing these cattle on a sample basis from January 2013, subject to confirmation before the change is implemented that there has been no change in the risk assessment.

I am replying on behalf of Harry Burns, Tony Jewell, Michael McBride and myself.

SEAC have previously stated that the risk to human health from a move from 48 to 72 months as the testing age for healthy slaughter cattle is insignificant, and I see no reason to change their expert assessment. However this is provided the prevalence of BSE remains low.

We support SEAC's view that continued effective surveillance must continue and the efficacy of surveillance protocols be maintained.

This is especially true of the surveillance of fallen stock and casualty animals as the recent identification of three cases of atypical "L-Type" BSE in fallen cattle shows. The previous identification of three cases of "H-Type" BSE also reflects on the utility of effectively maintained systems of surveillance. It is notable that in all six cases the cattle were over 11 years of age, and in five of the six cases were fallen stock. It

is therefore essential that fallen stock and casualty animals, of whatever age, continue to be subject to ongoing surveillance.

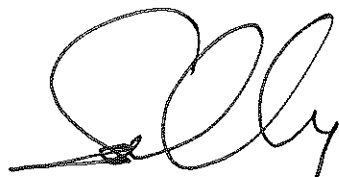
Effective BSE monitoring should remain in place to maintain confidence in the accurate ascertainment of the continued decline in the number of BSE cases, and to ensure that any future potential increase in BSE incidence or prevalence is identified and acted on.

Whilst we can support, with assurance of continued surveillance, the move from 48 to 72 months, we would wish to see full details of the sampling basis proposed for use from January 2013, including evidence from current risk assessments, updated epidemiology and any concomitant proposals, before we comment. Therefore if the FSA Board does agree to your second recommendation we would welcome a further opportunity to comment in advance of any firm proposals to implement.

We are reassured that FSA continues to recognise the importance of both the continued controls on specified risk material (SRM) controls and the continued exclusion from the food supply to cattle born before August 1996.

We welcome the FSA's continued vigilance in ensuring the protection of the food supply, and therefore public health, from the TSE dangers.

*Yours ever*



**DAME SALLY C DAVIES  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER**