Temporary Operational Instruction

Action note: 2025-06-04 – BSE Negligible Risk Status - GB

Purpose

This action note is to inform operational staff of a new, temporary operational instruction relating to **Bovine products** exports from England, Wales and Scotland to the EU and Northern Ireland, now that all three areas have been recognised as having BSE Negligible Risk (NR) Status by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) FSS will issue their own operational instructions.

Background

On 29 May 2025, England, Scotland, and Wales were recognised by WOAH as having BSE Negligible Risk (NR). Prior to this GB used to be BSE Controlled Risk (CR) status. The final status has been updated in their website today, 4 June 2025

https://www.woah.org/en/disease/bovine-spongiform-encephalopathy/

As a result, certain products considered before as Specified Risk Material (SRM) (under the CR status) can now be used for human consumption (see table below).

Whilst these materials can be moved freely as fit for human consumption or be used as cat 3 Animal By-Products (ABP) in GB, cannot be traded with the EU or NI until EU Commission Decision 2007/453 is updated, which is likely to take up to 6 months. This creates some challenges that we are trying to address with this note.

Bovine SRM in CR and NR regions table

Bovines born, reared and slaughtered in region (Art(2) of 999/2001)	**CR status**	**NR status**
Skull, brain and eyes (excluding the mandible) of bovines over 12m of age	SRM	SRM
Spinal cord of bovines over 12 months	SRM	SRM
Vertebral column (excluding the vertebrae of the tail, the spinous and transverse processes of the cervical, thoracic and lumber vertebrae and the median sacral crest and wings of the sacrum, but including the dorsal root ganglia, or bovines over 30 months)	SRM	NOT SRM
Tonsils of all ages	SRM	NOT SRM
Mesentery including mesenteric fat, mesenteric ganglion complex and mesenteric nerves of bovines of all ages	SRM	NOT SRM
Caecum of all ages	SRM	NOT SRM
Last 4m of the small intestine of bovines of all ages (small intestine comprises of duodenum, jejunum and ileum)	SRM	NOT SRM

Procedure

See details in Annex 1.

Front line staff are required to note the following action

Note and action the contents of the action note, ensuring it is read by all front-line staff. In particular:

- OVs should ensure that the Action Note is read by all FSA staff, and this is recorded in the daybook.
- Discuss the contents of the Action Note with those FBOs processing beef, and enquiry whether they will choose to continue applying CR controls until the UE recognises the NR status.
- If the plant intends to apply NR controls, inform your FVC and ensure the FBO amends HACCP and SOPs before implementing any changes.
- Where necessary, print a copy for the plant file.

Distribution

This action note will be:

- uploaded to the Temporary Operational Instruction Folder held in the MOC area of SharePoint (accessible only on an official FSA device)
- logged on the Temporary Operational Instruction tracker (accessible only on an official FSA device)
- published alongside the MOC chapters on food.gov.uk

The action note will remain live until either incorporated into the MOC or revoked.

Action note drafted by and date	Action note agreed by and date	Published and date
JR/RG 03/06/2025	LG 04/06/2025	04/06/2025

Annex 1

Regulatory requirements

Bovine Negligible Risk SRM is defined in assimilated and EU Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001, Annex V, 1 (a) (i) and 1(b) as:

- the skull excluding the mandible and including the brain and eyes,
- and the spinal cord of animals aged over 12 months.

These tissues still need to be removed under the Negligible Risk status. It should be noted that there is no change on what is defined as SRM in sheep and goats.

New requirements

Since **4 June 2025 GB** has been recognised as being BSE Negligible Risk. England, Wales and Scotland can from this date handle SRM as per the BSE NR requirements.

https://www.woah.org/en/disease/bovine-spongiform-encephalopathy/

FBOs (Food Business Operators) are not legally required to remove tissues classified as Specific Risk Material (SRM) for countries with Controlled Risk (CR) status when the animals come from England, Wales, or Scotland, in accordance with Regulation (EC) 999/2001. Therefore, these tissues can either be disposed of as category 2 or 3 Animal By-Products (ABP) or, if harvested hygienically, sold for human consumption

However, for exporting to the EU and Northern Ireland (NI), and any other country that requires EU compliance, NR status from WOAH is not automatically recognised. Therefore, establishments exporting directly or indirectly to EU countries require SRM controls to remain in place as per the CR risk status. That applies to both meat and animal by-products.

The EU need to update EU Commission Decision 2007/453 to provide formal recognition of NR status which is estimated might take up to 6 months. Any trade with

the EU or NI would require Specified Risk Material (SRM) controls for controlled BSE risk countries to remain in place.

FSA, FSS and Defra have been working in partnership with Industry representatives and agreed that FBOs will continue with their controls as per Controlled Risk status during this interim period to facilitate EU and NI trade. FBOs therefore will maintain the status quo and that means that they should handle and dispose of the SRM as before (under CR status), keeping their current SOPs and HACCP.

Individual plants may decide not to follow that approach, and this document contains instructions on what to do in these cases.

General rule

To facilitate trade, majority of the meat industry has agreed to continue processing as per Controlled Risk status until the EU Regulations are updated. This includes the removal of SRM as described in (EU) 999/2001 for a country listed as controlled BSE status and identify any OTM bovine carcase, half carcase or quarter with a red striped label if it derives from an OTM bovine.

Deviations from that standard should be treated as described in the “certification” section of these emergency instructions.

Establishments wishing to apply NR status before EU regulations are updated

This is a commercial decision that might have an impact on trade therefore, OVs working with FBOs that chose immediate implementation of NR status are to discuss these potential consequences with their FBO.

Industry has been made aware that any product exported to the EU derived from a bovine animal that has been slaughtered, dressed and produced to NR status controls during the interim period before the EU has formally recognised our NR status, could jeopardise our reputation and relationships with the EU and put our approval to export bovine products at risk.

It is very important that OVs signing Support Health Attestations (SHAs); or Veterinary Declarations in bovine slaughterhouses do ensure that during this interim period, products that are or could be destined for export to EU countries and NI do comply with the requirements that apply to the Export Health Certificate 8368 point II.1.8. In any case, the principles of certification are to be followed.

It is also important to remember that other importing countries may have their own requirements, regardless of the BSE risk status recognition by WOAH. For instance, Japan only accept meat from UTM bovines and still requires the removal of tonsil material from tongues, South Africa requires removal of all nervous and lymphatic tissue; and USA maintains their own list of the BSE statuses and accepts applications to determine status.

These are only examples and exporters still must satisfy the Certifying OVs that appropriate attestations as listed in the relevant Export Health Certificates (EHCs) are met and assure compliance with the requirements of the destination country prior to certification and export.

It is responsibility of the certifying OV for the final product (food or ABP) to have evidence that these extra requirements have been met at source and throughout the production chain, based on the principles of certification.

Certification

Certification principles remain unchanged. As per the FSA position, the OV should issue one SHA per species daily, unless otherwise agreed. Any extra certification linked to the change of status, becomes a commercial decision for the FBO to resolve outside the Statement of Resources (SOR).

When the OV is asked to sign a SHA to support export to EU or related countries, they are to declare that production has been carried out as per **CR** status in accordance with the requirements of EU Regulation 999/2001 where, England and Wales are still considered as CR, not NR.

In cases where the FBO presents an alternative document to SHAs, the OV needs to make sure that the regulation quoted on that document is the EU version of Regulation 999/2001 and not assimilated (EC) 999/2001. In cases when assimilated regulation is referenced, the OV should explain to the FBO that such declaration may not be accepted further down the line of certification.

However, that declaration quoting assimilated regulation can be signed as long as all the conditions in the document are met, including the removal of SRM material as required for a country with NS BSE status. In any case, when signing declarations for meat intended to be exported to the EU, the OV is to be satisfied that the SRM has been removed as required for countries with CR as defined in both version of EU 999/2001.

If an FBO declares they do not want to export any product, the OV needs to make sure the implications of this decision are clear to the FBO; that any certification issued can only confirm compliance with negligible risk requirements as per assimilated (EC) 999/2001. In any other case, the responsibility of making sure that the exported product meets the requirements of the importing country remains with the exporter and export certifying OV.

In slaughterhouses, the FBO is still responsible to make sure that any red striped labelled carcase is either dispatched to an authorised cutting plant or exported with the red label to the destination country before signing the certificate for that meat (when required).

Controls in cutting plants authorised for VC removal

OTM carcases, half carcases and quarters from England, Wales and Scotland that are exported to the EU still need to have the red stripe label. In addition, the VC form these carcases still need to be removed from any smaller portions (e.g. roasting joints, T-bone steaks, etc) before it is exported, as per each FBOs SOPs/ RMOPs.

The verification, in cutting plants, of the removal of VC from OTM bovines that were born, raised and slaughtered in England, Scotland or Wales is no longer needed,

unless they have been marked with the red stripe label, as intended for export to the EU or a country still considering England, Wales & Scotland as CR. As the 3 countries of GB are now under Negligible BSE risk status, the vertebral column of OTM bovines intended for the domestic market is no longer classified as SRM and can be disposed of as 3 category ABP, although not suitable for export to the EU or NI.

Additionally, the need to dispatch OTM carcases to an authorised cutting plant for the removal of the vertebral column (VC) is still a legal requirement for bovines originating from territories such as e.g. Greece, the Isle of Man, Guernsey or any other territories with controlled or undetermined BSE risk.

The vertebral column from red stripe marked carcasses is still to be removed and disposed of as cat 1 as they have been produced in line with the requirements that apply to countries with CR and these requirements are to be followed through the process.