

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) Consultation Q&A

Defra, Welsh Government and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) are seeking your views on a number of proposals which would amend the 2010 Regulations in England and the 2008 Regulations in Wales.

Q&A

1. What are TSEs?

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) are diseases of the nervous system of which BSE in cattle and scrapie in sheep and goats are the most well-known.

Rules for the control and eradication of TSEs are laid down in Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 of the European Parliament and the Council (as amended), which is mirrored in domestic UK legislation.

2. Why are you proposing to make these changes?

We are proposing a package of amendments that would implement a number of changes to the EU TSE Regulation within domestic TSE legislation, together with amendments to domestic legislation that would provide better value for money for the taxpayer.

3. What changes are being proposed?

The key proposals are:

- **Responsibility and Cost Sharing:** A measure to transfer the cost of taking samples from fallen cattle (animals that die, or are killed, other than for human consumption) for BSE testing from the taxpayer to the industry in England and Wales, at an estimated cost to industry of £574,000 per year (an average of £12.50 per cattle holding).
- **TSE Compensation:** A measure to amend the provisions in English TSE legislation for the payment of compensation for sheep and goats killed as TSE suspects or following the confirmation of classical scrapie on a holding, by amending the existing “table values” to reflect current replacement values for these animals, and to remove the existing option for individual valuation. This is intended to give a fairer balance of cost between taxpayer and farmer. It is estimated that three holdings are affected every ten years, with a maximum cost to industry of £265,000 on a single holding in any one year.

- Amendments to TSE feed controls: To amend domestic TSE legislation to reflect two amendments to the EU TSE Regulation, which enable the feed industry in England and Wales to use processed animal protein derived from insects in feed for aquaculture, and permit the export of processed animal protein derived from ruminants in England and Wales, both subject to certain conditions. These changes reduce the burden on industry in line with reduced risks from BSE as the epidemic continues to decline.
- Specified Risk Material (SRM): To amend English and Welsh TSE legislation to reflect three amendments to the EU TSE Regulation relating to the control of SRM.
- Plus a number of minor and technical amendments.

4. Would the proposed changes reduce the level of protection to human and animal health?

Our key controls will remain in force to protect public and animal health from the threat posed by BSE.

Our vigilance continues to be maintained through:

- The ban on feeding certain animal proteins to farmed animals, which prevents the spread of BSE to animals through feed;
- Removing specified risk material (SRM) – the parts of animals carrying most risk if infected – at slaughter to protect consumers from risk from food;
- Carrying out active surveillance on fallen stock and other high risk animals (e.g. those found sick at abattoirs) to monitor for end of the epidemic and for recurrence of BSE and thereby check on the continued effectiveness of BSE controls;
- BSE remains a notifiable disease in the UK; and,
- All animals suspected of being infected with BSE are killed and tested for the disease and their carcasses are destroyed.

5. Would the proposed amendments result in any financial burden to industry?

The majority of the proposals would have little or no cost implications and some are beneficial to industry but the following proposals are expected to have a financial impact upon industry:

- We propose to transfer the cost of taking samples from fallen cattle for BSE testing to the industry. This would provide a saving for the taxpayer of approximately £574,000 per year. The cost of sampling is £6.25 per animal. We estimate that this would result in an annual average cost of £12.50 per cattle holding, i.e. two samples per year.
- We propose to amend the provisions in English TSE legislation for the payment of compensation for sheep and goats killed as TSE suspects or following the confirmation of classical scrapie on a holding, by amending the existing “table values” to reflect current replacement values for these animals, and to remove the existing option for individual valuation, which tends to result in overly generous payments. Because incidence of classical scrapie in the UK is now very low and our default response is to monitor affected holdings for further occurrences of the disease, we expect very few holdings (a maximum of three in ten years) to be affected by this proposal. The maximum amount estimated for a single holding of 2,000 goats is £265,000.
- We propose to amend on-farm controls for classical scrapie in line with amendments to EU legislation. These changes are expected to affect two holdings per year in England and Wales at a cost of £2,025 per year.