

Anne Milton MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health  
Department of Health  
Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

2 June 2011

Our ref: MC06712

*Dear Minister*

### **BSE TESTING OF CATTLE SLAUGHTERED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION**

This letter sets out the Food Standards Agency's advice on whether UK-wide implementation of proposed changes to the EU rules on BSE testing would be acceptable on food safety grounds.

Member States have agreed a European Commission Decision permitting the UK and 24 other of the European Union's 27 Member States, to raise the age threshold for BSE testing of healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption from 48 months to 72 months. The BSE testing surveillance requirements for "risk" cattle (those most likely to test BSE test positive, but not BSE suspects) would remain largely unchanged and those for BSE suspects (cattle with clinical symptoms of disease) would remain unchanged.

Subject to completion of a month's scrutiny later this month and publication in the Official Journal, the change could be adopted from 1 July 2011.

Adoption of the changes permitted by the Decision in the UK is subject to FSA advice in relation to food safety and agreement by Ministers.

The Decision would also allow for BSE testing of a sample of healthy cattle slaughtered for human consumption aged over 72 months from 1 January 2013. Before then, this aspect of the Decision will be subject to further discussion and advice from the FSA.

The main protection for consumers from exposure to BSE is provided by the removal of specified risk material (SRM), which is estimated to remove almost all of


the infectivity from an infected animal. In addition, cattle born or reared in the UK before the reinforced feed ban came into force in August 1996 remain permanently excluded from the food supply.

In the light of advice from the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), the views of the UK Chief Medical Officers and following public consultation, the Board considered its advice at its meeting on 25 May. Subject to the condition that effective surveillance for BSE remains in place, the Board agreed to advise Ministers that:

- it would be acceptable on grounds of risk to consumers to raise the age threshold for BSE testing healthy cattle slaughtered in the UK for human consumption to 72 months from July this year;
- 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, assurance that effective surveillance for BSE would remain in place and further consideration by the FSA Board.

This advice will be published on the FSA's web site with the advice from SEAC and CMOs referred to above.

I am copying this letter to Dame Sally Davies, and am writing in similar terms to Jim Paice, Edwin Poots, Michelle O'Neill, Michael Matheson, Richard Lochhead, Lesley Griffiths and Alun Davies.

yours  
  
JEFF ROOKER

Approved by the Chair and signed in his absence

Alun Davies AM  
Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and European Programmes  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

2 June 2011

Our ref: MC06712

*Dear Deputy Minister*

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Your early views on this advice would be appreciated, so that the necessary arrangements can be put in place and stakeholders informed of any change in the BSE testing regime that is to occur on 1 July. If you should have any concerns or questions, please let me know so we may discuss further when we meet on 15 June.

I am copying this letter to Edwina Hart, and am writing in similar terms to Lesley Griffiths, Anne Milton, Jim Paice, Edwin Poots, Michelle O'Neill, Michael Matheson and Richard Lochhead.

yours  
  
PR

JEFF ROOKER

Approved by the Chair and signed in his absence

Richard Lochhead MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment  
Room 1N.08  
St Andrews House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

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*Dear Cabinet Secretary*

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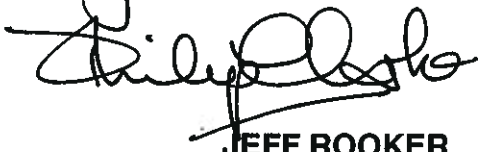
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I am writing in similar terms to Michael Matheson, Anne Milton, Jim Paice, Edwin Poots, Michelle O'Neill, Lesley Griffiths and Alun Davies.

yours  


**JEFF ROOKER**

**Approved by the Chair and signed in his absence**

Michelle O'Neill MLA  
Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development  
Dundonald House  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Belfast  
BT4 3SB

✉ June 2011

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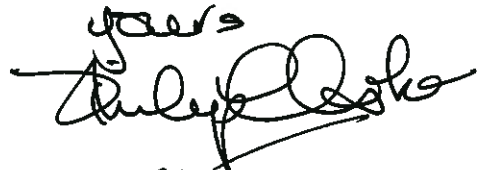
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Rooker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

PP JEFF ROOKER

Approved by the Chair and signed in his absence



Michael Matheson MSP  
Minister for Public Health  
Room 1E.10  
St Andrews House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

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I am copying this letter to Dr Harry Burns, and am writing in similar terms to Richard Lochhead, Anne Milton, Jim Paice, Edwin Poots, Michelle O'Neill, Lesley Griffiths and Alun Davies.

yours  
  
PP

**JEFF ROOKER**

**Approved by the Chair and signed in his absence**

Lesley Griffiths AM  
Minister for Health and Social Services  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

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**JEFF ROOKER**

**Approved by the Chair and signed in his absence**

Rt Hon Jim Paice MP  
Minister of State for Agriculture and Food  
9 Millbank  
C/O 17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

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**JEFF ROOKER**

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Edwin Poots MLA  
Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety  
Room C5.10  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
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PR

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