



## USDA'S BSE TESTING PROGRAM

### USDA Answers Your Questions

**PRODUCER:** What is USDA's Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Testing Program?

**USDA:** It is a one-time effort that will provide a snapshot of our cattle population to help determine whether BSE is present in the United States.

The goal is to test as many cattle from the targeted high-risk population as possible in 12 to 18 months. Samples will be taken from slaughter facilities, rendering plants, livestock auctions, veterinary clinics, public health laboratories, and farms and ranches.

**PRODUCER:** What are targeted high-risk cattle?

**USDA:** Experience in Europe has shown that testing high-risk cattle is the method most likely to identify BSE if it is present. Generally, these are adult animals that have some type of clinical abnormality that could be consistent with BSE. This includes cattle that are dead, down, or disoriented.

**PRODUCER:** How will the testing be done?

**USDA:** USDA personnel will collect brain samples and send them to an existing network of State and Federal laboratories approved to conduct rapid testing for BSE. If a sample tests inconclusive there, confirmatory testing will be done by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) at the National Veterinary

Services Laboratories (NVSL). NVSL will test each sample using immunohistochemistry (IHC), which is recognized internationally as the gold standard for BSE testing, and/or Western blot when applicable.

**PRODUCER:** What happens if one of my cows tests positive?

**USDA:** The cattle owner will be compensated for any cattle taken as a result of the traceback/traceforward investigations. Any quarantine of affected animals would be temporary, and losses due to the investigation will be reimbursed.

**PRODUCER:** What are the goals of the BSE Testing Program?

**USDA:** The goals are to obtain enough samples from the targeted population to help us determine whether BSE is present in the United States and, if so, at what level. This information will help us determine if additional animal or public-health control measures need to be implemented. This information will also help reassure our trading partners about the animal health status of the U.S. cattle population.

**PRODUCER:** Why does USDA need my help?

**USDA:** While most of the samples will come from off-farm sources, for the program to be statistically sound, some samples will have to come directly from

producers. This is especially true in States that do not have disposal facilities, such as rendering or salvage slaughter facilities.

**PRODUCER:** What can I do to help?

**USDA:** If you have a dead, down, or disoriented cow, call the toll-free BSE hotline right away at 1-866-536-7593.

The costs involved with sampling the animal, such as disposal costs, will be covered by USDA.

**PRODUCER:** Why should I care about the BSE Testing Program?

**USDA:** Doing the right thing isn't always easy, but it's still the right thing. If BSE is found and dealt with on someone else's operation, you would benefit from the increased reputation of America's vigilance against this disease. And, even though the scientists who are running the testing program hope they don't find another case of BSE, being able to reassure our customers and our trading partners is very important.

**PRODUCER:** Where can I learn more about the BSE Testing Program?

**USDA:** More information is available online at: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/bse/bse.html>



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