
GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF ANIMAL HEALTH
Mexico-United States Commission for Prevention of Foot-and-Mouth Disease
and other Animal Exotic Diseases

BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, also known as “mad cow disease”, is a non-contagious, chronic-degenerative disease that affects bovine and is characterized by alterations to the central nervous system of afflicted animals.

What is its geographical distribution?

There have been cases reported in Canada, the United States, Brazil and most European countries.

Who or what causes it?

It is caused by an infectious particle called “prion”, which is smaller than a virus.

How is the prion transmitted?

The prion is housed in organs and tissues of infected ruminants (mainly in the brain, eyes, spinal cord and small intestine). It can be transmitted when bovine consume food prepared with meat and bone flours from infected ruminants.

What are the clinical signs?

Bovine present alterations of their central nervous system and display fear, anxiety, nervousness, aggression, muscular trembling, hypersensitivity to the touch, light or sounds, reluctance to pass through doors or small obstacles, uncoordinated walking or difficulty to get up; moreover, they can present snout licking, excessive salivation, teeth grinding, alteration of cardiac rhythm, loss of body condition and reduction of milk production.

Infected bovine die two months after the onset of clinical signs.

How is the disease diagnosed?

It is difficult to clinically distinguish bovine spongiform encephalopathy from other neurological or metabolic diseases such as rabies, listeriosis, Aujeszky disease, acetonemia, hypocalcemia, hypomagnesemia, polioencephalomalacia or plant intoxication, since signs are similar; therefore it is necessary to diagnose in an official laboratory.

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How can it be prevented?

There have been no reported cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, thus, it is necessary to bolster food manufacturing food practices for products intended for bovine consumption, and stop feeding cattle with food for birds, pigs or companion animals.

SENASICA carries out a permanent epidemiological surveillance aimed to timely detect animal diseases endangering livestock assets and the public health of our country.

Report immediately to the official veterinarian services about any suspicious case; an official veterinarian will visit the production unit, obtain the samples for laboratory diagnosis and give the appropriate instructions.

Contact us for more information or to report any suspicious cases:

Emergency phone: 01 (800) 751 2100
(24 hours/day - 365 days/year)

Phone: 01 (55) 5905 1000
(Extensions 51236, 51242 and 51243)

E-mail addresses:
sive.dgsa@senasica.gob.mx
gestioncpa.dgsa@senasica.gob.mx

You can also report at any SADER or SENASICA offices, or at the Regional Coordination Offices of the CPA closest to your community.