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# Experiment shows pigs can catch BSE

By David Blackwell

A GOVERNMENT research programme has proved that a pig can contract the so-called "mad cow" disease. It is the first experiment to show that pigs can catch bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

As a result of the experiment, the government made statutory from midnight last night the voluntary ban by animal feed compounders and pet food manufacturers on the use of specified cattle offals already prohibited for human consumption.

The pig which contracted the disease was one of 10 inoculated with infected material at the Central Veterinary Labora-

tory at Weybridge, Surrey. Two died of other diseases and the remaining seven are still healthy.

Mr Keith Meldrum, the government's chief veterinary officer, stressed yesterday that no pigs had contracted the disease orally, or in natural conditions. The experiment demonstrated that pigs were capable of succumbing to the disease "under extreme laboratory conditions".

Mr Ray Bradley, head of pathology at the laboratory, emphasised that inoculation with a large amount of infected material was "a totally unnatural route which could not by

any stretch of the imagination occur in pig farming".

The Tyrrell Committee, which advises the government on BSE, believes there is no need for any further action as far as human health is concerned. Mr Richard Kimberlin, an independent scientist who stood in for Dr David Tyrrell, chairman of the committee, at yesterday's Ministry of Agriculture press conference, said that the result of the experiment had not surprised him. "Oral exposure is very different indeed," he said.

In a further measure, the ministry said legislation coming into force on October 15

would require all cattle farmers to keep a record of calves born into their herds and the identity of the mother.

Mr Meldrum said there was no evidence, however, that BSE could be transmitted maternally.

Over the last 12 months nearly 13,000 cattle have been slaughtered because of BSE.

Dr David Clark, the shadow agriculture minister, welcomed the announcement of a ban on ruminant feed for pigs but called on the government to step up research into BSE and to identify hygienic and safe ways of disposing of unwanted meat and animal remains.

THE INDEPENDENT

## Offal ban for pigs after BSE test is positive

By Nicholas Schoon

A PIG has been infected with BSE, the "mad cattle" disease, in an experiment carried out by Ministry of Agriculture scientists, it was announced yesterday.

The ministry said the finding should not give pork-eaters cause for alarm, because there was no reason to believe it could ever happen outside a laboratory.

But at the same time it said that the suspect cattle offals which were banned from human consumption last year would also be banned from consumption by pigs, pets and poultry from midnight last night. It will not apply in Northern Ireland.

Petfood manufacturers have already applied a voluntary ban for over a year. The offals involved are the brain, spinal cord, intestines, spleen, thymus and tonsils, all of which can or may harbour the unknown agent which causes spongiform encephalopathy (SE) disease. Farmers and the supply trade were already bringing in such a ban voluntarily.

Keith Meldrum, the ministry's chief vet, said: "By doing so we're reducing the exposure of animals to the BSE agent, and thereby reducing any risk."

The ministry's expert advisory group on SE diseases, the Tyrrell Committee, said: "As far as human health is concerned, we do not believe this interim result requires any further action to be taken."

The pig was one of 10 which had large quantities of mashed-up brain from BSE-infected cattle injected directly into their brains at the Central Veterinary Laboratory at Weybridge, Surrey, early last year. Two of the pigs died of

unrelated causes and the other seven show no BSE-like symptoms. But one became apprehensive and slightly aggressive, lost its appetite and began falling down.

It was killed, and a post mortem examination found the characteristic holes in its brain and the microscopic fibrils which are characteristic of spongiform encephalopathy (SE) diseases.

Ray Bradley, of the Central Veterinary Laboratory, said the dose was some 100,000 times higher than a pig would receive through eating contaminated feed. "This could not occur naturally in pig farming."

It is the first time a pig has been known to succumb to an SE disease. Sheep have harboured scrapie, an SE, for hundreds of years, but it appears never to have spread to pigs despite having been fed sheep offal.

SE is believed to have jumped the species barrier from sheep to cattle — both ruminants — early in the 1980s after cows were fed with protein feed derived from sheep offal. A new method of turning the offal into feed introduced in the late 1970s reduced the time it was heated.

Dr David Clark, Labour's agriculture spokesman, described the Government's action as "too little, too late". So far 18,095 cases of BSE have been confirmed in cattle. An SE disease has also been diagnosed in five cats, although the ministry believes the disease may have been simply unnoticed until now rather than being connected with petfood.

DAILY EXPRESS

## New curb as pig dies of mad cow disease

CATTLE offal was last night banned in animal feeds after a pig died from mad cow disease.

It was one of 10 pigs which had massive brain injections of BSE at a laboratory.

They were given doses "100,000 times higher" than they could have received by eating contaminated feed, said a veterinary spokesman.

The government ban, which will include pet food, was described as "good house-keeping" by Dr Richard Kimberlin, a specialist in BSE.

He was not surprised by the result of the experiment.

Cattle offal was banned for human consumption last year. So far 18,095 cases of BSE have been confirmed in cattle.

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TODAY

# MAD SOW DISEASE

MAD cow disease has been passed to pigs for the first time.

The dramatic news last night forced the Government to slap an immediate ban on offal in all pet foods and farm animal feeds.

New fears over the killer disease came after a pig died of BSE during a controlled experiment in a laboratory.

TODAY has been campaigning for the Government to bring in the ban for over 12 months.

It will stop cow brains, spinal cords, spleens and other parts of the nervous system being used to feed dogs, cats, chickens, geese and any other farm animal.

Government vets have always thought it was impossible for pigs to get the disease.

But last night chief vet Dr Keith Meldrum admitted: "One pig has succumbed to an experimental challenge from BSE."

The pig got Mad Pig disease, PSE, after being injected with BSE-infected brain.

The animal's brain turned to sponge with holes in it. It became bad-tempered, erratic, could not stand properly and was eventually slaughtered.

"This is a terrifying development," said one Murdoch Digest. Professor Richard Lacey last

by PAUL WILENIUS  
Political Editor

night. "If a pig can be affected it can certainly affect humans."

"The agent that causes BSE now appears to be capable of affecting pigs, mice, zoo animals and cats. That's a large range of mammals and I think there's a substantial risk for human beings."

"Biologically, pigs are as near as you can get to us, apart from monkeys."

Already seven cats and 12,600 cattle have died of BSE and the Government is desperate to make sure the disease does not spread further and jump into other species.

Farmers last night fully supported the new ban, but said it had been calling for such

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## Midnight ban on all pet food as BSE hits pigs

### Mad sow alert

From Page 1

action since June. The major problem is that millions of animals including cats and dogs have been eating meat containing the offal for years.

Britain's biggest pet-food makers have been operating a patchy voluntary ban for many months but now anyone breaking it will face huge court fines.

The details of the first case of PSE emerged in June.

After a series of meetings, the Government's Tyrrell Committee looking into BSE met in secret last Wednesday.

Committee experts said: "It would make sense to extend this prohibition to feed for all species, including household pets."

But the committee does not feel there needs to be any other action to protect human health.

The eating of bacon, pork and ham is perfectly safe, stressed the Ministry of Agriculture. But Dr Rich-

ard Kimberlin of the committee said he was worried that pigs were still exposed to risk, as are pets.

Government scientists also warned yesterday that the number of cattle to be struck down by mad cow disease will double next year to over 25,000.

A big consumer group is now drawing up lists of supermarket chains which guarantee not to sell British beef.

#### Calls

The West German move follows calls by their country's vets for a total import ban on live cattle and beef from Britain.

They described existing restrictions as a political compromise which was unacceptable "as long as it remains unproven that BSE cannot be transferred to humans."

Imports of both British beef and cattle are already tightly controlled by Germany. Sheep and animal feed from Britain have been banned for years.



**TODAY**



# Ban on pig food is one year too late

by DAVID PAUL

THE ban on bovine products has come far too late according to microbiologist Professor Richard Lacey.

"Farmers should have stopped feeding pigs the same sort of offal that turned cows mad

at least a year ago," said Professor Lacey, of Leeds University.

"Intensive farming methods are dangerous. In effect this is cannibalism."

He added: "Until we know exactly what is in products like pies and sausages I would advise people not to eat them."

Meat and Live-stock Commission director general Chris Oberst said: "The transmission in the experiment has been achieved by the most artificial means of brain-to-brain injection."

"The pigs in the experiment were 18 months old and you don't eat pork when it's 18 months old."

The pet food industry said the ruling would not affect production.

"Since June 1989 there has been a voluntary ban on the use of specified bovine offal in our products," said a spokeswoman for the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association.



TODAY: May 15 1990

## Our fight for truth

TODAY has led an 18-month campaign warning of BSE.

On February 28 1989, we accused ministers of dragging their feet over BSE.

On May 15 1990, we said Agriculture Minister John Gummer was treating the public like fools.

On May 21, we revealed links between scrapie and BSE.

On May 24, officials admitted BSE had spread to cats.

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# Gummer's last chance

THERE are two questions that must now worry everyone following the Government's revelation of the first case of Mad Pig disease.

Will the brain-destroying virus spread even further? And will the Government still be insisting that there's nothing to worry about when it does?

At every step of the way, the Government has done too little, too late. It refused to compensate farmers properly for reporting Mad Cow infection.

It failed to ban offal in pet foods and poured scorn on the idea that the brain disease could jump across new species barriers, perhaps even to humans. Now, with the first Mad Pig, it has been forced into a virtual admission that the virus might affect any living animal.

The Government's midnight ban was swift. But its long record of secrecy and delay leaves us troubled.

There is only one way to eliminate Mad Cow disease and that is to kill every animal that gets it — and all their calves too. But the Government still will not slaughter the calves. Agriculture Minister John Gummer must change his stand. If he does not, confidence in Britain's farming industry — and him — will quickly reach zero.

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## PET FOOD MEAT BAN IN 'MAD PIG' SCARE

SUSPECT cattle offal in animal feed and pet foods has been banned after a pig was killed by 'mad cow' disease. It died after being infected with infected cattle brain during a laboratory experiment. A Government spokesman said the ban had been imposed as a precautionary measure and he insisted that the discovery that a pig could be infected with the disease under laboratory conditions did not mean an outbreak of 'mad pig disease' was likely.