Death of pig from 'mad cow disease' prompts offal ban

A pig has died after being infected with "mad cow" disease by scientists.

Simultaneously, in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, the Departments of Agriculture banned the use of all animal feeds containing meat and bone meal for cattle offal and tissues, thought to harbour the disease, BSE.

Agricultural Minister Lord Stalham said one pig contracted the disease after being injected with infected cattle brains in England but there was no sign that the disease could spread to pigs or farms.

Only one of 10 pigs subjected to massive brain injections at the Central Veterinary Laboratory, Weybridge, caught the disease. It is the first known case of BSE among pigs, although at least five domestic cats in the United Kingdom are known to have died from a disease similar to BSE.

The ban on cattle offal and tissues, which came into operation at midnight, made statutory a voluntary ban on offal in feed to cattle, and extends the ban on such feedstocks to all animals and birds.

According to the Government's Advisory Committee on BSE, the results of the experiments with pigs have no implications for human health and the disease does not affect consumers.

Lord Stalham said the announcement of a statutory ban is "good news for the farmers of meat, but it is a blow to the consumer".

A £25 million beef promotion is to be launched next month in Great Britain. It will be followed by a similar drive in Northern Ireland.

About 100 cases of BSE have been confirmed in cattle in the Province, compared to 15,095 in Great Britain.

In the BSE experiments on pigs, they were given given doses of infected material "100,000 times higher" than they could have received by eating contaminated food.

Lord Stalham said the new ban was aimed at stamping out what the respectable meat industry labelled "cowboy operators" and to allay fears that the disease may arise from "wild cocked theories".

The British Veterinary Association discounted any implications for the pig industry, food safety and public health following the experiments.