

FILE

IN CONFIDENCE

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## EXPERIMENTAL PORCINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

1. Please see the attached minute to CMO with news that pigs are sensitive to BSE, at least experimentally.
2. It is possible that this and other emerging evidence hints that the BSE agent may not have identical properties to scrapie agent. So far there is no evidence that British pigs have been affected naturally but then exposure to BSE agent (rather than scrapie agent) in feed is relatively recent (probably post 1984 only). So it is plausible pigs could be preclinically affected with BSE but since so few are allowed to reach adulthood this has not been recognised through clinical disease.
3. This will be discussed in the next 10 days by the Tyrrell committee and by that time it would be helpful to know:
  - (a) the extent of use of British pigs in parenteral pharmaceuticals and implantable devices and
  - (b) of these whether there are any particular key products made from neural/lymphoid tissue.
4. Even if it is considered no action is needed, this news, when it breaks, is likely to concentrate attention on all possible implications for humans. I suggest you wait for first comments from the Tyrrell group before raising the matter with your own advisers. But some information gathering in the meantime from your own records might be helpful all round.

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