

BSE PROHIBITION ON CERTAIN BOVINE OFFALS

- 1. Now that the consultation letter has been issued there are a number of points that arose in its preparation that we need to pursue.

Bovine Eyes

- 2. John Wilesmith (his minute of 12 July) informed us that Guernsey had stopped supplying bovine eyes for use in teaching biology in schools as they are disposing of the whole head in their ban. This raises the question of whether there will continue to be a source of bovine eyes for teaching from the rest of Britain or whether our ban on certain offal will affect this trade.

- 3. The UK ban does not of course include eyes but I should be grateful for any information recipients have on this unusual aspect. Are eyes removed at the slaughterhouse or at a specialist company? If the latter, the requirement for staining the head before removal from a slaughterhouse would presumably affect the eyes. Is this an important industry for teaching or are alternative sources (eg sheep eyes) available or suitable?

Sutures

- 4. I understand that sutures are produced from small intestines (worth around £300k per year). The major source is bovine though I believe ovine intestines are also used. It may be that we will need to include an exemption for small intestines for suture manufacture as well as casings but before we do so we need to establish:

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- (i) would bovine sutures present a risk to human health or would their processing remove all lymphatic tissue and any risk?
- (ii) if not, are there sufficient suitable alternative sources?

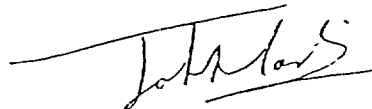
Spinal Cord, Thymus and Spleen for Pharmaceuticals

- 5. As I understand it, virtually all spinal cord goes for rendering with just a very small amount going for pharmaceutical use. For thymus about 30% goes for pharmaceuticals (value £132k per year) and for spleen such use is worth about £170k per year. The main company involved is Castlefield Foods (previously called Gland Supplies) who have been included in our consultation list but again any information or advice recipients have would be welcomed. I assume that the ban itself would not stop these products being sent for pharmaceutical use but in practice would slaughterhouses differentiate between various uses in complying with the requirements <sup>to</sup> stain or sterilise...? Apart from that the same questions raised for sutures apply.

Mechanically Recovered Meat

6. I am informed that one abattoir at least has stopped using cattle bones for mechanically recovered meat because of the residual <sup>presence</sup> of nervous tissue. As our action on offals is already a measure of "extreme prudence" going beyond scientific advise in the Southwood Report I assume that we do not wish to get embroiled in further measures on MRM.
7. If anyone can help I would appreciate replies by 11 August.

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27 July 1989

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