



**BSE: Lifting the export ban and
harmonising SRM controls applicable in the UK
with those in other Member States**

Draft response to the Consultation Paper

by

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December 2005

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1. **The Rare Breeds Survival Trust** represents endangered native breeds of cattle in the UK, which contribute significantly to the diversity of farm animal genetic resources (FAnGR) and do not conform to standards and procedures appropriate for breeds in the mainstream of the livestock industry. Historically, they have been disadvantaged by many procedures and their value has been underestimated. Therefore, we welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation document.
2. Several endangered native breeds of cattle showed no incidence of BSE, and others a negligible level, but they have been disadvantaged by measures to control the disease. The OTMS prevented marketing of their high-quality products. From an earlier consultation, we noted that the mean age of slaughtered healthy cattle with BSE in EU15 in 2004 was 95 months, and that none of these was aged under 36 months. For the period 2001-2004, only one animal was aged under 36 months. Therefore we consider that **there is a strong case for the age limit for the removal of SRM to be not less than 36 months.**
3. The purpose of the proposed legislation is to amend the Bovine and Bovine Products (Trade) Regulations 1999 to bring UK law into line with EU law. This will permit the resumption of exports of cattle and bovine products. We accept that the value of beef and bovine products in 1995 were more than £600 million, but endangered native breeds derive negligible benefit from that trade. **We recommend that derogation is introduced to allow removal of VC at a greater age by marking carcasses from these breeds for the UK market only when requested.**
4. Cattle born before August 1996 are not affected by this legislation. They will not be allowed into the food chain, but will be eligible for compensation if slaughtered within 3 years of the lifting of OTMS. Although not relevant to this consultation, it must be noted the further disadvantage to many traditional native breeds which at that point (estimated 2009) will continue to contain a significant proportion of animals still in breeding condition.
5. In order to enable the possible resumption of exports by complying with EU rules, the vertebral column (VC) will need to be removed from cattle over 24 months of age at slaughter in cutting plants, compared to 30 months in UK at present. This would encourage many abattoirs to accept only animals under 24 months of age, and it would place an extra cost on animals over 24 months of age. **It would be especially damaging to traditional breeds, which mainly derive their value from mature high quality beef for the domestic market, and derive no benefit from the export market.**
6. Currently, circa 50% of UK cattle are slaughtered over 24 months of age, and the FSA recognises the damage that would be inflicted on traditional breeds, small abattoirs and craft butchers. The impact on endangered native breeds, marketed through specialist groups such as TBMM Co, would be even greater than these figures suggest. **More than 80% of animals from these breeds are slaughtered at 24-30 months of age.**

7. Two derogations are being considered: 1. To raise the age limit to 30 months; 2. To allow removal of the VC by approved butchers. Both are desirable, but both fall short of our requirements. In order to realise the full value and quality of traditional breeds the age limit should be raised to 36, or even 42, months. We are disappointed that such opportunities are not being offered to those breeds that are devoted to quality niche markets in the UK. **The option provided in the EU Regulation allows VC from cattle over 30 months to be removed in butcher's shops.**
8. Three options are offered for discussion:
 - a. **Option 1** (*Leave the situation as it is. This probably would prevent the export of cattle and bovine products, and might jeopardise the domestic market*) **would be the least damaging to endangered native breeds.** It would permit them to supply the quality market of beef on the bone from cattle up to 30 months of age, and the absence of the export market would not disadvantage their niche market.
 - b. **Option 2** (*Amend UK legislation to comply with EU legislation. This would require VC to be removed in a cutting plant from all cattle over 24 months of age*) would not be acceptable to endangered native breeds.
 - c. **Option 3** (*Amend UK legislation but apply derogations to allow VC to be removed by butchers for cattle up to 30 months of age*) has potential advantages beyond Option 2 for endangered native breeds depending on the procedures applied to implement the legislation.
9. The analysis of 'Costs and benefits' details the disadvantages likely to be incurred by amendment to the Bovines and Bovine Products (Trade) Regulations 1999 through Options 2 and 3. Those most adversely affected would be "**farmers** who keep slow maturing grass fed cattle - - **small abattoirs** without cutting plants - - **craft butchers** who purchase half or quarter carcasses - - **consumers** would be unable to buy T-bone steaks - -". These are integral elements of rural infrastructure, and **Options 2 and 3 would have a severely adverse social impact.**
10. Option 3 is more to be preferred than Option 2, but there is a further downside if Option 3 is chosen. Butchers wishing to remove VC would need to apply for authorisation, and then would incur extra costs of SRM disposal and of inspection by the local authority. Many smaller units are likely to consider it not worth the trouble. While the derogations detailed in 7 above appear superficially attractive, **the likely benefit will not be realised if abattoirs and butchers determine that the extra conditions are too onerous.**
11. At this stage it is not clear who would meet each item of cost. **We would request that Government meets the costs of inspection in order to prevent undue burden on small butchers.**

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