

Advice 05-2008 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC: risk evaluation of raising the age limit for the tests concerning the active surveillance of BSE in cattle

The Scientific Committee was asked to evaluate the risk, on one hand, for animal health (epidemiological surveillance of BSE in cattle), and on the other hand for public health, of raising the age limit for carrying out the BSE obligatory rapid detection tests in cattle (active surveillance), and this according to the different options proposed by the European Commission.

Concerning the animal health risk, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that raising the age limit for testing will increase the risk of non timely detection of a possible re-emergence of the disease in cattle. The Scientific Committee recommends to wait for the soon expected EFSA opinion which will contain an extensive risk evaluation, harmonized for all the Member States. The Committee also reminds the existence of guidelines emitted by the OIE concerning the level of BSE surveillance to be ensured by the Member States for the categorisation of countries according to their BSE risk. According to the Scientific Committee, a complementary way to detect a possible re-emergence of the disease is by intensifying the passive (or clinical) epidemiological surveillance.

Concerning the public health risk, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that raising the age limit for testing is unlikely to influence the public health because of the poor diagnostic sensitivity of the current tests. It emphasizes the predominant importance of the withdrawal of the specified risk materials (SRM) for the protection of the public health. Moreover, a decrease of the active surveillance can only be considered on the condition that all other measures (appropriate Feed Ban, withdrawal of SRM, control of the cross-contaminations, etc.) are maintained and controlled.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french, respectively under the section "Wetenschappelijk Comité/Adviezen" and "Comité scientifique/Avis".