



BSE and the Ruminant Feed Ban

Updated: February 2008

AG1118

Paul Beltz, Horsham

ISSN 1329-8062

Victoria and Australia enjoy a global reputation for being free of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and other Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs).

Stock food manufacturers, sellers of stock food, and livestock producers need to be mindful of the need to protect our BSE free status by rigorous adherence to the Ruminant Feed Ban and related legislation.

What is the Ruminant Feed Ban?

The feeding of restricted animal material to ruminants is banned throughout Australia. The ban is uniformly enforced through regulatory compliance auditing and industry Quality Assurance (QA) programs, and supported by appropriate screening and confirmatory tests.

What is Restricted Animal Material?

Restricted Animal Material (RAM) is any material, tissue or blood taken from an animal, including fish, and includes meal obtained from rendering tissues or blood from animals.

It includes rendered products such as blood meal, meat meal, meat and bone meal, fish meal, poultry meal and feather meal, and compounded feeds made from these products.

It excludes appropriately rendered tallow, gelatin, milk products, oils extracted from fish or oils previously used for cooking that have been appropriately collected, processed and packaged

What livestock must not be fed Restricted Animal Material?

The feeding of restricted animal material to ruminants is banned throughout Australia. Ruminants are animals that chew the cud, such as cattle, sheep, goats, deer, buffalo and camelids¹.

Why is the feeding of Restricted Animal Material to ruminants banned?

Australia is free from BSE and other TSEs such as scrapie. The Ruminant Feed Ban, and its enforcement, serves to ensure that if the disease agent causing BSE were ever inadvertently introduced to Australia it would not be able to establish a cycle of infection.

Continued access to export markets for beef and a range of related livestock products is dependant upon the livestock and associated industries implementing a wide range of activities to ensure that recognition of Australia's free status is maintained. Many of these activities, including the Ruminant Feed Ban, are based on the requirements and recommendations of international bodies such as the World Health Organisation and the World Animal Health Organisation.

What legislation applies in Victoria?

Victoria has a legislated Ruminant Feed Ban. The ban is enacted by an Order made by the Minister of Agriculture under section 25A of the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992*.

Victoria also has legislation relating to the labelling of stock feed that contains restricted animal material. The labelling requirements are effected by section 18(1)(a) of the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992* and Regulations 5 and 6 of the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) (Ruminant Feed) Regulations 2005*.

Who does the legislation affect?

The legislation covers those people, companies and organisations who manufacture, sell or supply feedstuffs, as well as users who feed manufactured feedstuffs to stock, particularly to ruminant animals.

Everybody handling feedstuffs has a special responsibility to closely examine the product labels. Under no circumstances should a ruminant animal be fed a feedstuff labelled with a warning that the feedstuff contains material that must not be fed to ruminants. Feeding of RAM to cattle is understood to be how the BSE epidemic occurred in the United Kingdom and Europe.

What are the responsibilities of manufacturers, suppliers and sellers of stock food?

Manufacturers, suppliers and sellers of stock food (ie any manufactured food for feeding to livestock) containing RAM are required to ensure that the stock food is labelled as follows:

"This product contains restricted animal material - DO NOT FEED TO CATTLE, SHEEP, GOATS, DEER OR OTHER RUMINANTS".

Manufacturers, suppliers and sellers of stock food (ie any manufactured food for feeding to livestock) that does not contain restricted animal material are required to ensure that the stock food is labelled as follows:

"This Product does not contain restricted animal material."

For bulk product, the labelling may be applied to an invoice. For feed or meal in bags, a tag must be attached to the product. If a bulk product is re-bagged into smaller bags, then each bag must be correctly labelled and separate equipment used to prevent cross contamination of different feed types.

What are the responsibilities of end users of stock food?

End-users of stock food, such as livestock producers, must not feed restricted animal material, or compounded feed or meal containing restricted animal material, or any product labelled as containing restricted animal material, to a ruminant.

How is compliance with the Ruminant Feed Ban enforced?

A comprehensive, risk-based compliance inspection/audit program is undertaken by all State and Territory authorities that targets all sectors of the livestock feed chain from renderers, to stock food manufacturers, stock food resellers and end-users. Samples may be taken and tested for RAM as part of the inspection/audit process.

If there is suspicion that the legislation may be breached during any inspection by authorised officers, an audit and feed sample may be undertaken at that time separately from the audit program.

Industry also continues to put considerable work into developing Quality Assurance programs, components of which address BSE-related ruminant feed restrictions.

What are the penalties?

Manufacturers, producers or resellers who feed or cause any ruminant to be fed restricted animal material may face heavy fines. In Victoria, the penalty can be up to \$26,400 or 24 months imprisonment, or both.

What other actions are taken to ensure Australia remains free from BSE?

In addition to the Ruminant Feed Ban and related legislation, other activities contributing to the maintenance of Australia's free status for BSE, and the ability to provide an on-going assurance of freedom, include:

- quarantine measures to prevent entry into the country of the BSE agent, such as the prohibition of the importation of meat and bone meal into Australia from all countries other than New Zealand since 1966 (New Zealand is also free of BSE);

- general and targeted surveillance programs such as the National TSE Surveillance Program;
- lifetime surveillance and post-arrival import controls over certain categories of imported ruminants;
- 'buy back' schemes for certain categories of imported cattle;
- research and development of improved diagnostic tests for TSEs;
- preparedness and response capability – AUSVETPLAN; and
- education and training programs to create awareness and develop the necessary competencies and capacity regarding the legislative rules on animal feed and TSEs. Training and education of relevant groups such as farmers, renderers, stock food manufacturers and resellers is ongoing.

For further information regarding the ruminant feed ban, visit the Department of Primary Industries website at www.dpi.vic.gov.au and follow the links "Agriculture and Food", "Animal Health and Welfare", and "Ruminant Feed Ban".

¹ alpacas, llamas, camels.

This Information Note was originally developed by Stephen Nee and was previously published in February 2006.

The advice provided in this publication is intended as a source of information only. Always read the label before using any of the products mentioned. The State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.