



CBC Television
The National
Friday, July 11, 2003

TRANSCRIPT

Health Canada worried about cattle feed

ALISON SMITH (HOST):

A U.S. maker of animal feed has admitted to breaking the rules meant to keep Mad Cow disease away. American authorities say the Washington State company sold cattle feed contaminated with animal tissue. They say the risk is small, but it's believed contaminated feed was what infected the one cow in Canada.

ALISON SMITH (HOST):

And a warning about cattle feed from authorities in this country -- actually an old warning that's come to light in newly released documents. Five years ago, senior officials at Health Canada told the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) it had concerns about what was in the feed, and why. David Common reports.



DAVID COMMON (REPORTER):

It's not a pretty practice, but in Canada, blood from slaughtered cattle is drained, rendered and turned into feed for other cattle.

**BRADFORD DUPLISEA
(CANADIAN HEALTH COALITION):**

Cattle are herbivores and they should not be forced to eat other animals.

DAVID COMMON (REPORTER):

In general, cattle cannot be fed to other cattle, the result of the 1997 feed ban imposed by Canada's food inspection agency. It feared BSE (the scientific name for Mad Cow disease) might spread through the food chain as it did throughout Europe.

But blood was excluded from that ban under the belief it did not contain the tiny prions that carry the disease. Now documents obtained under the Access to Information Act show that in 1998, a senior Health Canada committee warned the CFIA about having blood in animal feed. "No amount of prion agent can be considered 'safe' at this time." And saying: "... when the same species is fed back to itself, it increases the possibility of disease emergence ..."

SERGIO TOLUSSON (CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY):

We haven't taken any steps.

DAVID COMMON (REPORTER):

Despite that concern, neither Health Canada nor the CFIA changed the policy, which continues today.

SERGIO TOLUSSON (CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY):

At this point, it still does not seem that there's definitive proof that blood is a potential source of transmission .

DAVID COMMON (REPORTER):

But there is also no definitive proof it's safe. Not knowing for certain prompted most of Europe to ban the use of blood in cattle feed.

DR. CHRIS CLARKE (UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN):

We're going to find a lot of people looking at whether it is necessary to tighten up the regulations, whether it's necessary to go all the way to the ones that are now in place in Great Britain.

**BRADFORD DUPLISEA
(CANADIAN HEALTH COALITION):**

Obviously no one knows.

DAVID COMMON (REPORTER):

Many groups say allowing blood into cattle feed is yet more proof Canada was too lax in protecting the system.

**BRADFORD DUPLISEA
(CANADIAN HEALTH COALITION):**

Instead of taking these precautionary measures, we placated industry and hoped for the best -- and now we have Mad Cow disease. In essence, we gambled with our Industry and Canada lost.

DAVID COMMON (REPORTER):

But with the presence of that one case of BSE and the fear of more, the CFIA and Health Canada are reassessing all of Canada's animal feed regulations, including whether cattle blood should continue to be in cattle feed. **David Common, CBC News, Regina.**

-- THE END --

**Length: 500 words
Date: 30/07/2003
Time: 22:00 EDT**

