

L.7.- Prion test in practice in Belgium

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In order to guarantee the safety of consumers, the European Union has decided to organize the surveillance and the control of BSE in various ways.

In July 1994, the ban on the feeding of mammalian specific risk materials to ruminants (cattle, sheep and goats) was effective. The elimination of SRMs from the food chain is compulsory from 1 October 2000 and the Commission Decision of 29 November 2000 (2000/764/EC) imposes to all Member States the obligation of testing for BSE of all slaughtered animals aged over 30 months.

In this context, Belgium has been obliged to implement this directive in a very short delay. In mid-December, the Food Security Agency after receiving scientific advice from the reference laboratory decided to use the ELISA test finalized in the CEA at Gift sur Yvette (France) and commercialized by BIO-RAD.

The urgency of the situation pushed the Agency to ask accredited laboratories using ELISA technique in the agro-feed sector for help. On 2 January 2001, four laboratories had the necessary equipment to begin the test. From mid-January the number of laboratories raised to 18.

The repartition of the samples to be analyzed is daily organised by the BSE data bank which gives each laboratory the name of the slaughterhouse and the number of samples. The routine test used by the laboratories up to this day is the Platelia-BSE test from BIO-RAD.

All the documents used for the identification of the samples are standard. The same files are used for sending the results to the data bank. The laboratory has 30 hours at its disposal between the notification and the transmission of the results to the slaughterhouse and to the Agency in Brussels. The samples which are positive must be analyzed a second time before being sent to the reference laboratory for confirmation by other methods (histopathology, immunohistology, electron microscopy and Western Blotting). The results for 2001 and 2002 together with their repartition will be presented.

Keywords :

SRM, ELISA test, BSE