

Kansas Cattlemen Ask OIE to Re-Evaluate Brazil's Animal Health Status

On Friday, Kansas Cattlemen's Association was notified by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) regarding a beef cow that died in 2010 that was suspect for a neurological disease and a sample taken from the animal tested positive in immunohistochemical test on 6 December 2012.

According to the OIE, "On 18 December 2010, the Official Veterinary Services (OVS) were informed by the owner of a holding in the municipality of Sertanópolis (State of Paraná) on a recumbent bovine showing limb stiffness which was detected during routine inspection. Next day, when the OVS were going to visit the holding, they were informed by the stockman that the animal was dead. The OVS went to the holding to collect information and samples for the diagnosis of the cause of the death. As it is an area where rabies is present in herbivores, samples were taken for the diagnosis of this disease and for differential diagnosis, as recommended by the national protocol. The animal was properly buried on site. The animal was a beef breeding cow almost 13 years old at the time of death, according to information obtained during the epidemiological investigations. According to regulations and routine procedures to be implemented in case of suspected neurological diseases, the sample was tested for rabies and it was negative. As it was an adult animal negative for rabies, the sample was sent for laboratory analysis within the surveillance system for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). On 11 April 2011, a negative histopathological result for BSE was obtained in a laboratory accredited by the OVS. The sample was sent to the National Reference Laboratory, National Agricultural Laboratory (LANAGRO-PE), Recife, Pernambuco, for BSE diagnosis and it tested positive on 15 June 2012 by immunohistochemical test. The delay between the two tests was caused by an incident occurred in one of the laboratories of the accredited network for the diagnosis of BSE. That led to overload the system and to prioritize the diagnosis of samples which met BSE-risk characteristics, as established by the OIE. The sample belonged to the group "fallen stock" and to the age group "over 9 years", according to the Article 11.5.22 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. This classification led to consider the sample as showing a low diagnosis priority level, which resulted in a longer than expected delay from histopathological to immunohistochemical tests. According to the procedure manual on response to the occurrence of a BSE event in Brazil and as it is the first occurrence in the country, the sample was sent for confirmatory diagnosis to the OIE Reference Laboratory for this disease, Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), Weybridge, United Kingdom. The sample tested positive in immunohistochemical test on 6 December 2012. The epidemiological investigation shows that the animal's death was not caused by BSE and suggests that it may be an atypical case of the disease occurring in the oldest animals. Information collected during the epidemiological investigation shows also that the animal was reared in an extensive system on grazing."

Earlier this week, KCA contacted the OIE to address its concerns over the matter. In light of the events, KCA strongly encouraged the OIE to re-evaluate Brazil's animal health status.

"KCA understands that there are various factors that determine a country's animal health status, one of them being surveillance which encompasses the systematic ongoing collection, collation, and analysis of information related to animal health and the timely dissemination of information to those who need to know so that action can be taken. KCA contends that the lack of oversight and the lack of timely testing within Brazil's disease surveillance system indicate that it does not address disease prevention and control adequately. A two year lag time is simply not acceptable."

Brazil has the largest cattle herd in the world and is the largest exporter of beef in the world. In the first nine months of 2012 Brazil exported more than \$4.2 billion worth of meat. KCA stated that it can appreciate Brazil's role in a global market. However, as the world's largest beef producer, responsibilities are incurred and Brazil has shown that it has not taken the responsibility to provide oversight and proper surveillance. This could result in unsafe food that could likely affect multiple countries.

KCA expressed its disappointment that the IOE did not immediately take action, as Brazil still holds its negligible status. Official recognition of disease status is of great significance for international trade, and according to KCA, re-evaluation should be addressed.

"At the very least, it should be downgraded to controlled status, and a reprimand should be enacted."