



IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION OF BEEF IMPORTS FROM THE USA

1. The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) has suspended the import of beef from the USA with immediate effect. This is in response to the report that the USA may have found its first case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE, or Mad Cow Disease).
2. BSE is a slowly progressive disorder of the central nervous system of cattle. The affected animals show behavioural changes (eg. becoming aggressive, and unmanageable - hence the term "mad cow"), have difficulty in moving about and will finally become paralysed and die from the illness.
3. Countries must first be accredited by AVA to export beef to Singapore. AVA first suspended the import of beef from UK in March 1996 when the link between BSE and the variant Cruetzfeldt-Jakob Disease in humans was announced in UK. As a precaution, AVA also imposed an additional condition that all countries exporting beef to Singapore must certify that the country had been free from BSE for 6 years prior to the date of export.
4. Our beef is mainly imported from Australia, New Zealand and Brazil. This year, we only imported 988 tonnes, valued at \$12.2 million of beef from USA. From January to November 2003, the total import of beef is 18,393 tonnes valued at \$84.2 million.
5. AVA would like to reassure the public that beef in Singapore is safe for consumption. AVA takes stringent precautions to prevent the introduction of BSE, or mad cow disease, into Singapore. Any country found to have BSE will be immediately suspended from exporting beef to Singapore. AVA will continue to closely monitor the occurrence of BSE worldwide. Should any country be found to have BSE, we will take immediate precautions by imposing an outright suspension on the country.

**Issued by Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority
on 24 Dec 2003**

MEDIA RELEASE