

FLI and BfR reject the intra-species recycling of feed fats in the case of ruminants

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BSE is a fatal disease in cattle that involves spongiform changes to the brain. The disease is caused by infectious proteins, prions. The administration of feed containing proteins manufactured from infected cattle can infect more cattle. For that reason the administration of feed containing animal proteins to ruminants and other livestock has been banned within the European Union (EU) since 2001.

In its statutory provisions Germany went even further. Besides the feed ban for animal proteins under EU law, the administration of fat from the tissue of warm-blooded land animals and of fish as well as of mixed feed containing individual feed of this kind, to horses and other food-producing livestock is likewise prohibited in national law. This ban does not apply to the administration of fats from fish tissue to non-ruminants. What prompted this special path of the Germans are the results of studies which show that animal fats may also be involved in the onset of BSE. Furthermore, with the current customary slaughter techniques it is not possible to obtain fats that are free of nerve tissue. Under certain circumstances, this nerve tissue may contain infectious prions that are not detected by the BSE rapid test. Discussions are currently underway about whether it is possible to relax the German fat feed ban. Against this backdrop the Friedrich Loeffler Institute, the Federal Research Institute for Animal Health (FLI) and the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) have prepared a joint opinion on whether intra-species recycling of feed fats in the case of ruminants could entail a risk.

The consensus between FLI and BfR was that the presence of infectious protein-containing materials in fats from the tissue of ruminants can still not be ruled out. FLI and BfR urgently recommend the consistent prevention of the intra-species recycling of certain processed fats in order to rule out as far as possible the risk of recirculation of the BSE pathogen in animal stocks. The same reservations still apply to the feeding of ruminant fats to ruminants that apply to ruminant proteins.

The full version of this BfR and FLI Opinion is available in German on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/fli_und_bfr_lehnen_intra_spezies_recycling_von_futterfetten_bei_wiederkaeuern_ab.pdf