

Feed controls – stopping BSE (mad cow disease)

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Animal Biosecurity, NSW DPI

Why control stock foods?

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy or BSE, also called 'mad cow disease', does not occur in Australia. Overseas the disease has been shown to have been spread by meat meal fed to cattle. All Australian states and territories have banned the feeding of all animal material, such as meat or bone meal, fish or feather meals, to ruminant animals such as cattle, sheep, goats and deer.

The definition of feeding has been broadened so that you must not allow ruminants to have access to restricted animal material unless it is not reasonable and practical to prevent that access. For example, ruminants must be prevented from accessing dog food, effluent containing vertebrate material such as blood or feathers and other similar examples. However it is not reasonable and practical to prevent a cow licking a calf, sheep ingesting faeces or urine deposited naturally on the pasture by another sheep, cow eating its placenta, ruminant finding old bones of wildlife or herd mates and other similar examples.

The bans provide insurance against any spread of the disease in Australia and satisfy the requirements of some of our meat export markets. Label statements about the content of 'restricted animal material' or 'RAM' are required on stock foods to help protect the Australian livestock industries against infection with BSE. Tallow and used cooking oils which meet prescribed standards, gelatin and milk are exempt from the bans.

What are 'stock foods'?

Manufactured stock foods are foods for farm animals ('food producing species'), including horses, which have undergone a manufacturing process. They include:

- complete feeds
- feed supplements
- premixes

- licks
- blocks
- cracked or rolled grain or seeds
- compounded milk powders
- all animal meals – meat, fish, blood, bone or feather meals.

Buying and using stockfeed: The four point plan to avoid BSE in NSW herds and flocks

Do not feed vertebrate animal materials to ruminants

Do not feed vertebrate animal materials such as meat, fish or feather meal, bone or blood meal, or pet foods, to cattle, sheep, goats or deer. The feeding of all vertebrate animal products ('restricted animal material') to ruminant animals is illegal.

Poultry litter is likely to contain RAM so ensure ruminants do not have access to stored or spilled poultry feed or poultry litter.

Feed testing is being carried out to check compliance with the law.

Check and obey label statements

Do not feed ruminant animals any feed if the label states that it contains restricted animal material.

If feed is labelled only for feeding to particular animals - especially pigs or poultry – do not feed it to other animals.

Labels on stock food containing vertebrate animal tissue, bone, blood or feather meal should contain this statement:

This product contains restricted animal material – DO NOT FEED TO CATTLE, SHEEP, GOATS, DEER OR OTHER RUMINANTS.

If the product is suitable for ruminants it should contain this statement:

This product does not contain restricted animal material.

Purchase only labelled feeds

If in doubt as to whether a feed contains animal material, do not buy or feed it to cattle, sheep, goats, camelids, deer or other ruminants.

Unless the label or delivery docket / invoice clearly indicates that the feed is suitable for ruminants, do not buy or use it for ruminants.

Keep feeds separate on farm

Farms running both pigs/poultry and cattle, sheep, goats, camelids or deer should ensure that ruminant feeds are not mixed with pig/poultry feeds. Ruminant feeds must not be contaminated during transport, mixing, storage or feeding out of pig/poultry feeds.

Join a Quality Assurance Program – such as LPA/Cattlecare/Flockcare/Quality Plus – which allows tracing of bought-in feed used on your farm.

Implement a feed QA program to ensure that ruminant feeds are not contaminated on-farm by other feeds.

Ingredients such as whole grain or vegetable protein meals are excluded from the legislation unless they are sold or labelled as stock foods. Hay, straw and chaffs are specifically excluded. Gelatine and milk, or products made entirely from milk, are exempt.

Tallow which has a maximum of 2% moisture and insoluble impurities (M&I) is excluded from the bans. Used cooking oil is considered tallow if it is filtered to remove all particulate matter and meets the tallow standard for M&I.

Are horse feeds stock food?

Yes. Legislation includes horses in the stock food controls. However, premixes and similar supplements for horses are exempt and do not require the Restricted Animal Material or other stock food statements.

Minimum labelling requirements

Details of the person marketing the product, and the weight, are required under other legislation.

The Biosecurity Regulation 2019 requires a statement about the class and age/stage if production of stock for which the food is to be used as well as a 'restricted animal material' statement. Details of added salt or urea must also be provided.

Confirming compliance

Regulatory Officers employed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) visit stock feed manufacturers, retailers and users (farmers) to ensure compliance with labelling and feeding provisions. Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) also checks compliance with the feed bans.

More information

- Primefact 318 *Manufactured stock food requirements* at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/nutrition/safety-of-feeds/manufactured-stock-food-requirements>

For general inquiries regarding biosecurity, phone 1800 680 244 or email <mailto:animal.biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au>

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