

Extension Responds: BSE

Expanded BSE testing program underway

by Eric Hanson on 6/3/04 for Meatingplace.com

The Agriculture Department began its expanded testing program for bovine spongiform encephalopathy Tuesday, with the goal of testing between 200,000 and 260,000 cattle for the disease over the next year to 18 months.

According to the Associated Press, officials reported no problems handling the increased load of samples that came in to the newly approved regional testing laboratories.

Most of the cattle being tested are older animals unfit for human consumption. The testing plan also includes about 20,000 apparently healthy animals that are at least 30 months old.

The expanded testing program was announced in March (See USDA unveils expanded one-year BSE testing plan, Meatingplace.com, March 16, 2004) and replaced an initial increase in testing announced in January that would have doubled the number of animals tested to 40,000 from 20,000 the year before.

USDA officials consider the testing a one-time effort to detect the level of BSE in America. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman has said it is likely more BSE-positive animals will be found.