

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT FOR THE RESUMPTION OF TRADE IN BEEF AND BEEF PRODUCTS

by

the Government of the Japan and the Government of United States

October 23, 2004

On October 21, 22 and 23, 2004, the Government of Japan (GOJ) and the Government of the United States Government (USG) held Director-General level consultations in Tokyo on the resumption of beef trade between the two countries. During the meetings, the GOJ explained the review process of domestic measures against BSE. The USG explained their domestic measures taken against BSE and presented basic ideas for the resumption of two-way beef trade.

The GOJ and USG, as a result of their consultation, shared the view that under the following conditions and modalities the two countries will resume two-way trade in beef and beef products, subject to their respective domestic approval processes, based upon science. Further details of some conditions and modalities remain to be worked out by experts and working-level officials of both countries by the time of the actual resumption of trade.

A. JAPANESE EXPORT TO THE UNITED STATES

The United States will permit Japanese export of beef and beef products following relevant domestic rule-making procedures.

B. U.S. EXPORT TO JAPAN: MARKETING PROGRAM

The United States will establish a marketing program that enables a resumption of some trade for an interim time period (interim trade program). The operational details of the Beef Export Verification (BEV) Program managed by U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will be further worked out by Japanese and U.S. experts, major points of which are as follows:

1. Specified risk materials (SRMs) must be removed from animals of all ages.
 - a) The range of SRMs is defined as bovine heads (except for tongues and cheek meat, but including tonsils), spinal cords, distal ileum (two meters from connection to caecum), vertebral column (excluding the transverse processes of the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, the wings of the sacrum and the vertebrae of the tail) of all ages.
 - b) In regard to treatment of SRMs, USDA will verify the control program of each facility managed by HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) or SSOP (Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures).

2. Beef items including offals and variety meats must be derived from bovine animals verified to be 20 months of age or younger.
3. Bovine animals included in the BEV Program for Japan must be traceable to live animal production records which indicate that they are 20 months of age or younger at the time of slaughter. Records that will be used to verify this requirement by the USG must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - a) Individual Animal Age Verification
 - b) Group Age Verification
 - c) Insemination Age Verification
 - d) USDA Process Verified Animal Identification and Data Collection Services
4. Experts of both countries will continue to consult on carcass grading and quality attributes with a view to verifying physiological age to evaluate carcasses to be 20 months of age or younger. Additional information will be developed by USDA for consideration by the experts, including a special physiological maturity study (Terms of Reference attached in the Annex). This study will involve examination of maturity grades of samples of representative cattle. When the carcass grading system objectively demonstrates that it can verify physiological age to evaluate carcasses to be 20 months of age or younger, it will be used as a method to satisfy the BEV program requirement.

C. DOMESTIC PROCEDURES AND TIMING OF RESUMING TRADE

The necessary modifications to Japanese and U.S. regulations would be completed expeditiously so Japan and the United States will resume two-way beef trade immediately after completing their respective domestic procedures. In Japan's case, such domestic approval process includes deliberation by the Food Safety Commission. Both countries will undertake these domestic procedures and endeavor to resume the beef trade as soon as possible.

D. CONTINUED JOINT SCIENTIFIC CONSULTATIONS

1. Joint consultations by the Japanese and U.S. experts will be continued to help both sides gain a fuller understanding of the pathogenesis and patterns of the BSE disease. Specific topics to be addressed would include (but not limited to): BSE definition and testing methods; transmissibility; and current and ongoing research including the Japanese transgenic mouse assay.
2. Other international experts including from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the World Health Organization (WHO) would be invited to participate in the consultations.

3. The consultations would begin immediately and be conducted to provide information to be available for the BEV Program Review (as described in E below).

E. BEV PROGRAM REVIEW

The BEV Program (as described in B above) will be reviewed for modification as may be appropriate in July 2005. The joint review by officials of the Governments of Japan and the United States will take into account a scientific review to be conducted by OIE and WHO experts. The conclusion of the review, including the action to be taken, will be made by the consensus judgment of both Governments. In Japan's case, it will be subject to deliberation by the Food Safety Commission.

- Scientific Review. Experts from the OIE and the WHO will be asked to review existing and new information to be compiled during operation of the BEV Program and to provide guidance as to modifications that might be appropriately made and assure consumer safety in Japan-U.S. beef trade. The information to be reviewed will include:
 - Information made available by the joint scientific consultation as described in D above;
 - The United States BSE status according to OIE criteria to be reviewed; results of the U.S. enhanced surveillance program; U.S. feed regulations; and the range of BSE amelioration measures in place in the United States;
 - Cut-off age for BSE testing; and
 - Other relevant scientific information.

F. PREVENTION OF TRADE DISRUPTION

Both Japan and the United States have food safety systems in place that are sufficiently robust such that identification of a few additional BSE cases will not result in market closures and disruption of beef trade patterns without scientific foundations.

G. AUDIT SYSTEM

Following equivalency audits of each country's relevant food safety system and resumption of trade, both countries will cooperate to audit each side's facilities on a regular basis.

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ANNEX

Terms of Reference: Physiological Maturity of Beef Cattle Carcasses

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will conduct a special study in which steers and heifers of known ages (births identified within a one month period) are slaughtered and evaluated for physiological maturity. The purpose of the study is to determine an expected end-point maturity that will assure the exclusion of steers or heifers with a chronological age greater than 20 months from a certification program for export to Japan. This evaluation of physiological maturity on a representative sample of the U.S. fed-beef slaughter population will provide a reliable assessment of the age of cattle. The study, in consultations with Japanese experts, will be designed and the data analyzed utilizing internationally recognized sampling and statistical methods.

The study will be completed and a report presented within 45 days.