Přístup k testování skotu na BSE je v Severní Americe zcela jiný než tomu bylo a je v Evropě

V poslední době se v USA zvedá určitá „vlna odporu“ pod vedením určitých „aktivistických skupin“ poukazujíce na to, že jejich hovězí maso v podstatě není testováno na BSE. Oproti tomu například čeští řezníci mají u každého prodávaného masa „štítek“ (doklad) o původu (zvířata do 30 měsíců věku) a rovněž o BSE negativním výsledku (skot starší jak 30 měsíců). Takže například v ČR se takto děje již od zjištění prvního případu BSE (červen 2001)- v USA se tak ani zdaleka neděje, ani již téměř po třech letech od zjištění prvního případu BSE.

Proč tomu tak ve Spojených Státech je, nad tím jsme se již dříve pozastavili ve „Výzkumu v chovu skotu“ (Rapotín, prosinec 2002) následovně; „Zanedlouho se může stát, že jen americké hovězí maso bude považováno za “bezpečné“, jen americký lid bude mít nejkvalitnější hovězí maso. To však bude trvat jen do té doby; dokud se i v mediích nebude podstatně výrazněji upozorňovat na výše uváděné aspekty, týkajíce se „nálezu prionů“ v mozku krav. A sice na to, že ani například v ČR (kde na rozdíl od USA se v podstatě nevyskytují klinické příznaky nervového onemocnění u skotu) se BSE nevyskytovala. Avšak jen do té doby, než se „plošně“ začaly vyšetřovat krávy starší třiceti měsíců. A v tom je právě ten „háček“, protože v celých oproti nám „obrovských“ USA se ročně vyšetřují řádově jen „stovky“ kravských mozků = cca pouhý jeden tisíc vzorků za rok! To je možné citovat z Internetu a také v současné době zjistit v oddíle „USDA Actions“ zhruba následovně: **od roku 1990, více než 60 veterinárních laboratoří „napříč“ celými Spojenými státy, pokračuje ve vyšetřování „stovek“ mozků skotu ročně, avšak jen v případech podezření na nervové onemocnění**. Zdálo by se, že se jedná o nějaký „překlep“, že až tak zanedbatelný počet kravských mozků se v 60 USA laboratořích vyšetřuje na BSE- vždyť jen výskyt klinických nervových příznaků u krav tam musí být početnější („grass tetany“- východní pobřeží USA…)“- konec citátu.

Že tomu tak skutečně bylo, to je možné reprodukovat z Internetu (z ledna;2004) i v angličtině následovně;

Since 1990 ***, more than 60 veterinary diagnostic laboratories*** *across the United States and USDA´ s National Veterinary Services Laboratories* ***continue to examine hundreds of cattle brains each year submitted from adult cattle displaying neurologic signs either at slaughter or on the farm.*** *FSIS performs antemortem slaughter inspection at all federally – inspected slaughter establishments, and inspectors are alert for central nervous systém (CNS) disorders.* ***Any CNS suspect animals are condemned and tested****… BSE has not been found in the United States* ***. No cases of BSE have been confirmed in the U.S.A. with 13 years of active surveillance****… In fiscal year (FY) 2002 USDA tested 19,990 cattle for BSE using a targeted surveillance approach designed to test the highest risk animals, including downer animals (animals that are non- ambulatory at slaughter), animals that die on the farm, older animals and animals exhibiting signs of neurological distress… .*

BSE is a notifiable disease, and there are ***more than 250 Federal and State regulatory veterinarians specially trained to diagnose*** *foreign animal disease, including BSE. The United States has had an active* ***surveillance program for BSE in place since May 1990*** *(the surveillance samples) as of December 2003; in summary 57,362 brains have been examined; 1990- 40 samples; 1991- 175; 1992- 251; 1993-736; 1994- 692; 1995- 744; 1996- 1,143; 1997- 2,713; 1998- 1,080; 1999- 1,302; 2000- 2,681; 2001- 5,272; 2002- 19,990; 2003- 20,543 samples.*

Takže až do konce roku 2001- celkem za 12 let (kdy již jeden rok v EU probíhala

„honba na šílené krávy“) bylo v USA v 60 laboratořích, za asistence 250 „státně“ vyškolených veterinářů- vyšetřeno na BSE celkem 16829 kusů skotu (v průměru pouhých cca 1400 vzorků ročně!)

Takže je možné dodat, že se v bulletinu „Výzkum v chovu skotu“ o překlep nejednalo, že skutečně tomu tak se zhruba jedním tisícem vzorků ročně bylo. Z období začátku roku 2001 – po zveřejnění cca 4000 stran ze šetření v Británii „The BSE Inquiry“- byly v „novinách“ zveřejněny například i tyto údaje;

The US imported a mere 44 tonnes of British meat and bone meal (MBM) before 1996, plus 126 cattle that escaped *a subsequent round-up and could have ended up as feed. But last year, the European Commission's scientific advisers warned that any infection in those imports would have been spread and amplified by American rendering and feeding practices. American officials strongly deny this. "We have no BSE," says Linda Detwiler, who chairs…* ***More than 1,200 head of cattle in Texas*** *were quarantined last week for fear of exposure to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as "mad cow disease". The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is investigating whether* ***the feedlot eaten by the cattle contained meat-and-bone meal made from other ruminant animals****. St. Louis-based Purina Mills Inc. confirmed that its feed mill in Gonzales, Texas manufactured the questionable feed…. As BSE casts its menacing shadow across much of the globe, the* ***US is becoming increasingly nervous that its $400 billion beef industry may not escape****. Officials have taken precautions to keep BSE out. A „newspaper“ has established that even if the US has as high an incidence of BSE as France, where it has sparked a health and farming crisis, American surveillance efforts would not spot it….*

Jak je z dalšího textu v tomto příspěvku vidět, tak ani v současné době se v USA o nějaké „plošné testaci BSE“ u odborných kruhů (USDA) neuvažuje. Na obhajobu tohoto stavu úředníci USDA od začátku roku 2001 uvádějí, že „plošná testace“, je příliš finančně nákladná. Zmíněný úřad však tam má a **již od roku 1990 měl mimořádnou podporu u odborníků (vědců včetně lékařů), kteří s úředníky USDA naprosto souhlasně informovali a stále informují veřejnost** (média, Internet…) o tom, že v USA „lidská forma BSE“ nehrozí. Postoj úřadů se tam výrazněji nezměnil ani po tom, když se tam v prosinci 2003 BSE objevila a nic na tom nemění ani v současné době stále častější volání prostých Američanů po „bezpečnějším hovězím“.

Oproti této zdrženlivosti by tam však mělo být až obrovské „vědecké oponentské pozadí“ (dvě Nobelovy ceny za „prionová onemocnění“; američtí lékaři Gajdusek a Prusiner). Takže i vzhledem k jejich obrovské vědecké a diagnostické základně by se mohla **vtírat až myšlenka, že v USA již dávno úředníci USDA pochybují o existenci „lidské formy šílených krav**“. Pokud by však skutečně byla hrozba „infekčnosti MKM“ vědecky vyvrácena, jak se stále více zdá možné, že by státní úředníci v USA měly skutečně pravdu v tom, že by pro ně plošná testace na BSE byla příliš finančně náročná...

Zajímavé však je (viz níže uvedený text), že odkazování na vysoké finanční náklady je v rozporu s tím, když soukromá „hovězí společnost“ v Kansasu nemá problémy s vlastním financováním „na BSE 100% testace“. Problémem však je to, že to z „úředního hlediska“, pod patronací USDA není „předpisově“ možné. Je možné dodat, že tomu tak je již po téměř 3 letech od v USA zjištěné z hlediska celosvětového nejnebezpečnější na člověka přenosné „BSE nákazy“.

V roce 2004 jsme se ve čtyřech vydáních Časopisu komory veterinárních lékařů ČR („Zvěrokruh“) věnovali „šíleným kravám“. Tehdy v úvodním článku (BSE jinak?) v březnovém vydání jsme „seriál o BSE“ na doporučení kolegy Daniela zdůvodnili tím “**proč**

by právě česká veterinární profese nemohla zahájit třeba i širší diskusi o neudržitelnosti opatření, která mají velmi pochybné vědecké zdůvodnění…". S odstupem dvou let lze říci, že diskuse o BSE byla „opodstatněná", protože od roku 2004 až doposud jsou zjišťována další a další vědecká fakta; skutečně ukazující na pochybné zdůvodnění stále ještě platné „infekční teorie" o původu a šíření BSE. Dále potom jsem poukázal na to; **„ že by na doplnění mohl být uveden i článek, týkajíce se programu „BSE surveillance" v USA a to až v době, kdy budou odtud známy další „zajímavosti" (zejména zda přistoupí k „paušální testaci BSE"…). A toto potom porovnat s děním nedávným i současným v ČR, pokud se „depistáže" BSE týká (zdokladování v podstatě toho, že vědci v USA to nikdy s „hrozbou" infekce BSE vážně nemysleli)"-** konec citátu.

Je značně zajímavé, že jsem se vůbec v tomto směru nemýlil (článek „BSE jinak" jsem zasílal do redakce Zvěrokruhu v lednu 2004) v souvislosti s tím, když první případ BSE byl v USA zjištěn 23.prosince 2003. Téhož roku bylo v USA na BSE testováno asi 20 tisíc kusů skotu, přičemž na jatkách tam bylo v roce 2003 odporaženo asi 40 milionů kusů skotu. Takže testováno bylo zanedbatelné množství- okolo 0,05%. **Zjištění první „infikované krávy" v Moses Lake (stát Washington), bylo však více méně až „kuriozní",** jak se při této příležitosti uvádělo i v americkém tisku. Jednalo se o šestiletou krávu, která byla inspektorem Ministerstva zemědělství USA (USDA) „viditelně označena" - vzhledem k tomu, že nebyla schopna chůze. To však bylo přičítáno následkům poranění při porodu, což se stalo již před několika lety. Zjevné nervové příznaky BSE však nebyly zjištěny, takže kráva byla posouzena jako požívatelná- **vhodná pro výživu lidí**. Pozapomnělo se však na „označení" zvířete, takže vzorek na vyšetření BSE byl odebrán- odeslán. Avšak za 13 dní nato bylo oznámeno, že kráva byla BSE pozitivní. Mezitím však **maso infikované krávy bylo „zamícháno" do dalších cca 10 tisíc „poundů" jiného hovězího masa,** které bylo rozesláno do distribuční sítě osmi států USA, jakož i na ostrov Guam…

Inspektoři však i tak měli štěstí, protože po krávě zůstala zachována ušní „plastová značka", která mnohdy v USA u poražených zvířat chybí. **Farmáři tam nemusí dodržovat předpisy o značení zvířat** jako tomu je v ČR (pod pokutou…)- když se ušní značky „údajně ztratí" během přesunu zvířat na jatky apod., jak se lze dočíst z jejich tisku (nakonec ve dvou ze tří „BSE případů"- tyto problémy nastaly). Avšak již méně šťastné bylo to, že i několik týdnů po zjištění pozitivního výsledku, inspektoři nebyli schopni „dohledat" a karanténovat více než 80 dalších kusů skotu, který již před lety (stát Alberta, Kanada) dostával stejnou krmnou dávku, jako BSE pozitivní kráva. Že se tak skutečně v USA o „první na BSE pozitivní krávě" v jejich denním tisku psalo, to je možné reprodukovat následovně:

Dne 29.prosince 2003 bylo možné si přečíst „první odezvu" a to ani ne tolik vzhledem k ohrožení Američanů jednou z nejnebezpečnějších infekčních nemocí, která se zjistila na jejich území- jako spíše odezvu týkajíce se obchodu s hovězím masem s Japonskem, které v tomto směru bylo největším obchodním parterem s USA (ze 35 milionů v USA ročně poražených kusů jich 1,3 milionu putovalo do Japonska). Japonci se tehdy dotazovali, jaký „odpovědný postoj" (zda USA začnou na BSE testovat každou na jatkách poráženou krávu) úřady USA zaujmou k nově vzniklé situaci následovně:

„Stunned by its first case of mad cow disease two years ago, Japan spent tens of millions of dollars winning back consumer confidence with a ***system to test every cow*** *for the brain-wasting illness before slaughter.* ***Now, Japanese people may hold US beef producers to a similar standard****. Japan quickly banned imports of U.S. beef after discovery of BSE,*

slamming shut a market worth 1 billion USD. U.S. officials screen only cattle that show symptoms of the disease. U.S. agriculture officials have insisted current safeguards are „appropriate" and suggested comprehensive screening would be unnecessary and costly in the ***United States , which slaughters about 35 million cattle a year- dwarfing the 1.3 million processed in Japan".***

Jako další přípomínka k nové situaci (16.ledna 2004) zazněla v médiích opět zvenčí a to od FAO následovně:

„The discovery of the first case of BSE in the US in December 2003 highlights the need for countries to strengthen their BSE control measures and reduce risk, the UN´s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said in a statement this week. Learning from bitter experience following the BSE cases in the UK that saw over 100 people dying from vCJD, the human equivalent of mad cow disease, the European Union tested over 9 million animals in 2002/3, with France and Germany testing nearly 3 million each. According to the FAO, testing costs are estimated at around 50 USD per animal. Since the mad cow case was identified in Washington State last month, the US cattle industry has seen 3 billion USD in annual export sales slashed as countries around the world immediately put up barriers to US beef imports"

Avšak již za měsíc po zjištění BSE v USA, bylo možné 26. ledna 2004 z amerického tisku zjistit, že prvnímu případu BSE byla věnována pozornost i ze strany Američanů a že skutečně okolnosti s první detekcí BSE byly až „kuriosní". Psalo se tehdy, že; **Objev BSE v USA tak poráží dosavadní mýtus „zaručené obrany" proti této nemoci.** Již je popisováno, jak se vše přihodilo, jméno veterináře- objevitele BSE v USA zatím ještě uváděno nebylo, jak vyplývá z následujícího textu:

„The first case in the United States of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE—otherwise known as "mad cow" disease) was discovered in a Washington state dairy cow on December 23, 2003. ***Within days, dozens of countries that buy US beef banned imports, including Russia, Mexico, Japan and South Korea, bringing the $3.2 billion export industry to a halt.*** *When the disease first appeared in Britain in the mid-1980s, dozens of humans contracted variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob's Disease (vCJD), the human prion disease caused by BSE, after eating contaminated meat.* ***More than 140 people have died in Britain and Europe from the disease.*** *In a flurry of public statements reminiscent of the 1990 comments by the British agricultural minister—who said he had no qualms about his small child eating a hamburger—the US Department of Agriculture secretary Ann Veneman urged Americans to continue to eat beef regardless of the findings, saying the discovery of BSE posed no serious health danger. President Bush himself was tapped on New Year's Day to join the chorus of voices trying to prop up the beef industry.*

But on what grounds were all the reassurances based? Contrary to suggestions by industry spokesmen, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the media, precious little testing for BSE is actually done in the US. ***The USDA performed random BSE tests on approximately 0.03 percent of all slaughtered cattle in 2003—only 20,000 cows were tested out of the nearly 40 million head of cattle slaughtered last year.***

The ***detection of the infected cow*** *at Vern's Moses Lake Meats in Moses Lake, Washington,* ***was more or less accidental****. The six-year-old Holstein* ***had been flagged by a federal inspector because of its inability to walk****, which was the result of an injury during*

calving some years back, but not because of ***any visible signs of BSE****. In fact, the USDA inspector at the slaughterhouse determined that the cow "was not diseased, paralyzed or suffering from a neurological condition" such as mad cow disease,* ***and was thereby fit for human consumption. It was not until 13 days after the cow was slaughtered and processed that test results showed its brain tissue contained BSE prions (the infectious agent). By that time, the infected meat had been mixed in with at least 10,000 pounds of beef from other cattle slaughtered with it on December 9, and it had ended up in meat aisles, in refrigerators and on dinner plates in eight US states and Guam.*** *Inspectors were also lucky that the infected animal had a plastic tag on its ear identifying its farm of origin. According to federal meat inspectors,* ***many farmers have cattle without tags or whose tags have fallen off during transport or other activities****. If that had happened, the cow's identity might never have been known.*

Several weeks after the infected cow's origin was discovered, ***USDA investigators have not been able to track down and quarantine more than 80 other animals*** *that shared the same feed with the animal in its early years on an Alberta, Canada, farm****.*** *It is widely believed that BSE-tainted feed was the source of contamination.*

The real danger posed by vCJD

The human disease caused by BSE—variant Creutzfeld-Jacob's Disease—is in a league of its own among food-borne illness in that it is not caused by bacteria, and consequently cannot be cooked out of the food or treated with antibiotics. Instead, BSE is caused by an abnormal protein that gradually replicates its abnormalities in other healthy proteins it encounters—primarily in the brain and central nervous system of cows, sheep, pigs, deer and other animals. Over time, these abnormal proteins eat small holes in the brain—hence the "spongiform encephalopathies" one sees in a thin layer of affected brain tissue under the microscope. When this cell loss intensifies, especially in the vicinity of the cerebral cortex, it affects motor skills, cognitive skills and perceptive capacities. The primary symptoms of the disease are, as a result, paralysis, dementia, and blindness. There is no recovery from the disease, and treatment only consists of delaying the inevitable—once vCJD develops in a person, it is only a matter of time before the brain wastes entirely away. The inefficiency the prions exhibit in moving species to species means that a victim could develop symptoms of vCJD years after consuming meat containing BSE prions. The onset of the disease can be sudden, and the nightmarish progress of the disease is a gradual, irreversible and inevitable descent into insanity. Though there have been more than 100 reported cases of vCJD confirmed globally, what toll the disease has already taken on the world's population cannot be known for sure, because testing for it in humans requires an autopsy to remove brain tissue suspected of infection from the victim, and because such a procedure can cost on average around $1,500 at the victim's family's expense. Also, a patient with vCJD can easily be misdiagnosed with hereditary Creutzfeld-Jacob's Disease or with Alzheimer's, since the symptoms are so similar. Indeed, of the 4 million Alzheimer's sufferers in the US alone, we can only speculate how many could already actually be suffering from a BSE-related prion disease—estimates range from 3 to 25 percent, and are supported by the recent inexplicable spike in Alzheimer's cases. Studies are complicated by the relative absence of US federal funding for BSE research. Serious scientists interested in pursuing research and study in the area of prion diseases must either compete among themselves for the scant $27 million (2002) in total annual federal funds for BSE research (which, when considered against the backdrop of huge costs in equipment, maintenance and laboratory space, is a pittance) or enter the area of corporate-funded research. Scientists hired by the beef industry are pressured to conclude

that the company's product presents no health risk (i.e., they are given the humiliating and anti-scientific task of making sure the square peg fits in the round hole).

Food safety and deregulation

Independent scientists and consumer advocates have long warned that BSE would appear in the US. The giant agribusinesses that dominate the industry and their political representatives in Washington, on the other hand, have repeatedly resisted measures that could protect the public, including those that have substantially reduced the incidence of the disease in Britain and much of Europe since being instituted after the outbreak of the 1980s.

While only 20,000 cows are annually tested for BSE in the US, western European countries tested 10 million cows last year and Japan tested each of the 1.2 million cows it slaughtered. *It is estimated that the cost increase for universal testing per pound of beef in the US would be on the order of $0.05 per pound of beef ($20-$55 per head of cattle)—a figure the industry says is too costly.*

Proposals for systems to track which farms produced sickened cattle—already in place in Europe, Canada and Japan—have been blocked in the US. Agriculture Department officials have recently said they would speed up efforts to create a national database for tracking animals. The system, however, would be voluntary, leaving it up to the farmers and ranchers to decide whether to register their animals. Moreover, only 1 or 2 percent of "downer" cows—animals too sick or injured to stand, such as the Washington state cow—are regularly checked for BSE. ***Instead, between 150,000 and 200,000 of these animals, mostly older dairy cows unable to produce milk anymore, are slaughtered and turned into hamburger meat and other products each year.*** *Consumer advocates have long warned that downer cows—some so sick or injured that they have to be dragged or bulldozed to the killing floor—were likely sources of not only BSE, but of other threats to human health like E. coli, Salmonella bacteria and listeriosis. McDonald's, Wendy's and Burger King will not accept downer meat, and the USDA forbids it in school lunches.*

The response of the USDA to the discovery of BSE prions in the Washington cow was to ban directly feeding downer cows to humans and to demand speedier testing (the volume of mandatory testing remains the same). The measures, however, were little more than a public relations gesture, designed to placate the American consumers and foreign importers of US beef while imposing as little additional cost as possible on the beef industry. Officials in ***Japan, which accounts for 30 percent of US exports****, denounced the measures as inadequate and demanded BSE testing of all cattle. "There is no guarantee that BSE will not occur again in the US," a report from the Japanese agricultural ministry stated. A coalition of food safety advocacy groups in the US also denounced the measures, pointing to the previous loopholes the USDA had granted the beef industry.*

In 1997, the USDA banned the practice of feeding chopped up bits of cattle and other ruminants (mammals with multi-stomachs such as sheep and goats) to cows. Not only was enforcement lax given the lack of a sufficient number of inspectors, but the USDA continued to allow meat from other animals including chickens and pigs—which can contract BSE—to be included in cattle feed. Moreover, cattle parts and slaughterhouse waste at risk of contamination continued to be fed to pigs and chickens and then back to cows. Finally, cow blood, which can also carry the disease, continues to be widely fed to calves as high-protein "milk replacer" to encourage quick growth.

In 2002, the United States General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, concluded: "BSE may be silently incubating somewhere in the United States. If that is the case, then Food and Drug Administration's failure to enforce the feed ban may already have placed U.S. herds and, in turn, the human food supply at risk. FDA has no clear enforcement strategy for dealing with firms that do not obey the feed ban.... Moreover, FDA has been using inaccurate, incomplete, and unreliable data to track and oversee feed ban compliance."

Although the USDA said it would add some restrictions, it has yet to ban the use of so-called Advanced Meat Recovery (AMR) systems, which have been roundly criticized. In the mid-1990s, in an effort to further slash labor costs and increase output, meatpackers began using machines that could strip a few extra pounds of meat off carcasses using pressurized water jets. Critics have tried to limit the use of these machines, citing studies, including a 2002 USDA survey, showing that approximately 35 percent of high-risk meat products tested positive for central nervous system tissues (which have been shown to effectively transmit BSE prions). The beef industry also uses bolt guns, band saws and stunners to kill and eviscerate cows at the slaughterhouse, inevitably propelling potentially dangerous material from the brain and central nervous system throughout the carcass and into the blood stream, which can then travel to every part of the cow's body.

Finally, a very real danger exists that infected slaughterhouse waste could be transferred into the myriad of products made from rendering the non-meat remains on the killing floor. This multibillion-dollar industry includes everything from cosmetics to "gummy-bear" candies and gelatin, to dietary supplements, vaccines, steroids and blood-thinners. All of these dangers persist following the recent half-measures taken by the USDA.

Over the past decade, the USDA has presided over a vast and steady deregulation of the beef industry. ***Over $41 million of beef industry resources went toward buying those deregulations, and paying off those politicians*** *that saw them through. Republicans received about 80 percent of that money**,** though the meat business also paid off several high-ranking Democrats, including Senate minority leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota and former House minority leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri, both of whom draw votes from states in which the beef industry plays a major economic role.*

The Bush administration in 2002 killed a Senate proposal to prohibit US meatpackers from using downer cattle for human consumption. Just five months before the discovery of BSE in Washington state—after the first North American case of mad cow disease had already been discovered in Wanham, Alberta, in May 2003—Congress again blocked such a ban. One study by the San Jose Mercury News showed that the California representatives who voted against the ban received five times as much money in campaign contributions from the beef and dairy industry as those who voted against it.

A January 5 New York Times article documented the incestuous relationship between the industry and the federal regulators Bush appointed as top officials in the USDA. "According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer advocacy group, a dozen top officials of the Department of Agriculture have worked or lobbied for the beef industry or for industry trade groups. They include Jim Moseley, the deputy agriculture secretary, who was managing director of Infinity LLC, a hog farm; Dr. Chuck Lambert, the deputy under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs, who was chief economist of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association; and Mary Waters, the assistant secretary for Congressional

relations, who was senior director and legislative counsel for ConAgra Food." "It's not surprising the industry has so much influence given the number of USDA officials who have been hired directly out of the meat industry," Caroline Smith DeWaal, the center's food safety director, told the Times.

*Over the last 20 years, the meatpacking industry has been consolidated into in the hands of a small group of monopolies: Iowa Beef Processors (now part of Tyson Foods), ConAgra, Cargill, Farmland and Smithfield, which account for 80 percent of all cattle slaughtered in the country, and 60 percent of hogs. This consolidation followed the shakeout of the 1980s, which saw the destruction of tens of thousands of jobs, the shutdown of scores of plants, and a ruthless wage-cutting and union-busting drive at Hormel, Wilson Foods, John Morrell, IBP and other companies. Meat workers, who in the 1960s earned 16 percent more than the average factory worker, now make 25 percent less, and are largely made up of immigrant workers from Guatemala and Mexico, as well as several Asian countries. The US beef industry is a massive operation—**America as of 2001 exported as much as 16 percent of the world's beef, and annual receipts from the US cattle industry annually exceed $40 billion.** However, the pressure on profit margins—which rarely climb above 2 percent—has led the industry to repeatedly sacrifice public safety in order to slash costs and increase output.*

BSE and economic nationalism

*On January 6, the Washington cow found to have been infected with BSE prions was traced by its DNA and an ear tag to a herd located in Alberta, Canada, prompting a lot of posturing by political and industry leaders in both countries. **The previous May, the US restricted the import of Canadian beef after inspectors in that country discovered the first case of BSE in Canada**—a move that helped boost US beef exports and profits. Canada has now reciprocated by imposing restrictions on US beef. Politicians on the payroll of the beef industry got in front of the cameras with packets of hamburger wrapped up in red, white and blue, and labeled "Made in America," suggesting that adding "Country of Origin" labels would protect the public from infected beef. The industry for its own reasons—not wanting to emphasize the potential danger BSE poses to the public—moved quickly to quash a labeling mandate included in the new federal budget.*

However, no country is "safe" from BSE. Currently, for example, a country can legislate a ban on American beef, but this has the effect of simply diverting the beef—the beef or other byproducts are simply shipped from the US to a country with little or no regulations, repackaged, and then sent to the country that legislated the ban, disguised as a product of the intermediate country. Like the AIDS epidemic or the outbreak of SARS, mad cow disease is an international problem and must be combated as such. Vast recent advances in technology and medical knowledge have endowed the human species with the capacity to combat serious infectious threats, but the division of the world into competing nation states and the continuous subordination of social needs to the profits of huge multinational corporations serve to obstruct any internationally coordinated effort to do this. As long as the production of humanity's food is governed by the drive to maximize profit and not to safely meet the needs of public nutrition, preventable diseases like vCJD can quickly escalate into public health disasters.

Dne 23.února 2004- za dva měsíce po zjištění prvního případu BSE v USA bylo možno v tisku zjistit další celou řadu podrobností. Včetně toho, že „tělo“ na BSE pozitivní krávy bylo skutečně rozporcováno do neznámého množství hamburgerů. Přičemž nakonec se uvádí i jméno veterináře a další okolnosti jak tomu bylo s jeho „BSE objevem“, který vzápětí stál USA značné finanční prostředky- po zhroucení se jejich obchodu s hovězím ve světě- viz následující text;

„U.S. Department of Agriculture documents uncovered by United Press International provide new evidence the cow that tested positive for mad cow disease in Washington last December was healthy and not a "downer," as the agency has maintained.
The USDA has made such a claim since it announced the mad cow case on Dec. 23. Because the animal was a downer, officials said -- meaning it was unable to stand -- its detection is an indication the agency's national surveillance program for the disease is effective at detecting infected animals.
That position has come under fire recently, however. Last week, the House Committee on Government Reform sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, asking her to respond to the accounts of three eyewitnesses present at Vern's Moses Lake Meats in Moses Lake, Wash., where the cow was slaughtered Dec. 9, and other documents it uncovered indicating the cow was not a downer.
UPI has uncovered additional documents that provide further support the cow was walking at the time of inspection.
The documents indicate that a test for illegal antibiotics and a temperature reading are required to be performed on all downer animals. However, neither test was conducted, suggesting the animal was not a downer.
The adequacy of USDA's mad cow surveillance program hinges on resolving the downer dispute. The agency's program tests only downer cattle and those showing signs of central nervous system problems because these are the most likely to be infected. However, European inspectors have found hundreds of infected cows that did not display any symptoms. If the Washington cow was not a downer, it raises the question of how many other, seemingly healthy animals infected with mad cow went undetected and were approved for human consumption. Humans can contract a fatal brain disorder, known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, from eating meat tainted with the mad-cow pathogen. According to documents detailing the inspection of the cow in Washington the day it was slaughtered, there is ***no indication the USDA veterinary medical officer who listed the animal as a downer conducted a required test for the presence of illegal antibiotics.*** *This test, called either a STOP (slow test on premises) or FAST (fast antimicrobial screening test), should be conducted on all downers, according to a 2001 directive issued by the agency's Food Safety and Inspection Services that was obtained by UPI. The failure to conduct a STOP or FAST test indicates the veterinarian either did not follow proper procedures or the animal was not a downer, former USDA veterinarians told UPI. "That's neglect of duty" if the animal was indeed a downer, said Lester Friedlander, who worked for the agency from 1985 to 1995. "All downers have to have a STOP test done on them," he said.*
The 2001 directive advises USDA veterinarians that the antibiotic tests are warranted on all downers, defined as "any animal that was non-ambulatory," and they should "retain the tested carcasses until the test results are received."
The Washington animal, however, does not appear to have been tested and its carcass was not retained

"They never did any lab work on it," Dave Louthan, the Vern's Moses employee who killed the animal and was present when the veterinarian inspected it, told UPI.
"The carcass was never retained," added Louthan, who has maintained the cow was not a downer and testified to that effect before the Washington state legislature earlier this month. ***The cow was slaughtered on Dec. 9, a Friday, at about 2:30 p.m****. The antibiotic tests can take anywhere from six to 24 hours to obtain the results, meaning the veterinarian would have needed to return the next day,* ***Saturday, to interpret the tests and either pass or reject the carcass for human consumption****.*
Louthan, who worked that Saturday, said neither the veterinarian nor the meat inspector was present.
He said the ***carcass was loaded on a truck on Saturday morning and shipped out Sunday night. By Monday afternoon, it had been turned into hamburger meat*** *and was on its way to the store, he said.*
Tom D'Amura, a former USDA veterinarian who now works as an independent support veterinarian for Sagebrush Veterinary Services in Arlington, Texas, said he found it curious that a STOP test was not done.

The inspection sheet lists pelvic injuries for the cow, meaning it was at least suspect, D'Amura told UPI. On top of that, it was a dairy cow, in which antibiotic use is common, he said. "Alarm bells should have gone off with the veterinarian; the cow would have been a prime candidate for a STOP test," he said. "She should have been retained for STOP until the results returned no matter the (mad cow) business."
Steven Cohen, a spokesman for USDA's FSIS, declined a request by UPI to speak to the ***inspecting veterinarian, whom Louthan identified as Rodney Thompson".***

Ještě větší zájem Američanů o BSE však bylo možné vidět v tisku 5.března 2004, z čehož vyplývá až zájem některých „jednotlivců" potrestání „řeznické společnosti"- za uvedení „těla BSE postižené krávy" do distribuční sítě v USA.

„ An Eastside family who says they ate beef linked to the nation's only known case of mad cow disease yesterday filed a class-action lawsuit against QFC, claiming the grocery store chain negligently exposed them and others to „highly hazardous" meat and did not properly notify them that they had bought it. Attorneys for Jill Crowson, a 52-year-old interior designer from Clyde Hill, filed the lawsuit in King County Superior Court on behalf of her family and possibly hundreds of other customers ***who unwittingly bought and consumed beef potentially exposed to mad cow disease.*** *„I was pretty upset about it," Crowson said. „I've spent all of my kids' lives trying to be a responsible parent for them to keep them safe. I felt badly that the food I served could be harmful to their health." The lawsuit is believed to be the first stemming from this country's only confirmed case of mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, which was detected in a slaughtered Holstein from a Yakima Valley ranch on Dec. 23.*

Neither officials at Quality Food Centers' Bellevue headquarters, or Kroger – the company's Ohio-based corporate parent – could be reached for comment about the lawsuit yesterday. The suit contends the family bought and later ate ground beef from their local QFC that was part of a batch processed at Vern's Moses Lake Meats on Dec. 9 and included meat

from the diseased Holstein. ***The beef was later shipped to wholesalers and retailers in Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana and Nevada****. On Dec. 23 – after government scientists confirmed the Holstein was infected with BSE – businesses began pulling potentially affected beef from store shelves under a voluntary recall.*

But the family's suit claims that, although QFC was aware of the recall on Dec. 23, the store did not begin pulling the recalled beef from about 40 of its stores that carried it until Dec. 24. The company also did not try to warn customers about the recalled beef until Dec. 27 – and only then with small, inconspicuous signs inside the stores, the suit claims. Steve Berman, the family's attorney, said the company had „a duty to warn" consumers who bought the beef under terms of the Washington Product Liability Act. QFC could've easily notified customers by taking out TV, radio or newspaper ads, or by tracking and notifying those who bought the beef through customers' QFC Advantage Cards, Berman said. At Berman's downtown Seattle firm yesterday, Crowson described how on Dec. 22 and Dec. 23 – the day of the recall – she bought single packages of „9 percent leanest ground beef" from her local QFC store at Bellevue Village.

Crowson took the beef home, cooked it and made tacos one night and spaghetti the next – serving the dinners to herself; her daughter, Laura, 22; son, Nicholas, 19; and her niece, Claire De Winter, 23. Members of the family also ate leftovers from those meals for the next several days, Crowson said. „When the news about mad cow came out, I instantly became concerned," Crowson said. „But the initial stories didn't mention anything about QFC, so I thought we were OK." While shopping at the grocery store a few days later, Crowson said she asked a store butcher whether QFC stores had sold any of the recalled beef. The butcher assured her they had not, she said.

The family only learned QFC had sold any of the beef in question after reading a news story Jan. 10 about a Mercer Island man who discovered his family had eaten affected beef that he bought at a local QFC store, Crowson said.Crowson later called QFC and faxed the company a signed letter asking that it track purchases made on her QFC Advantage Card – a store discount card issued to customers. On Jan. 12, the company notified Crowson that the beef she bought and served to her family was, in fact, part of the recalled batch, she said.

Scientists believe people who eat beef from infected cows can contract a fatal form of the disease. The family is „now burdened with the possibility that they presently carry (the disease) that may have an incubation period of up to 30 years," the lawsuit says. Lawyers for the family say they believe hundreds, if not thousands, of QFC customers, and those of other stores, likely ate beef from the recalled batch – the reason why Berman filed their legal claim as a class-action lawsuit. A USDA official this week said that up to 17,000 pounds of meat affected by the recall likely was eaten or thrown out by customers.

Berman added that an investigator from his firm learned that QFC buys beef for its „9 percent leanest ground beef" products in large tubs that can weigh several hundred pounds, and then regrinds and packages the meat for sale. Because QFC stores regrind the beef before selling it, Berman contends that makes the store a manufacturer responsible under the Washington Product Liability Act for not selling any unsafe product. Scientists believe people who eat beef from cows infected with BSE can contract variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob, a fatal brain-wasting disease that has been detected in about 150 people worldwide.

However, officials with the U.S. Agriculture Department have repeatedly said the risk from eating muscle cuts from an infected cow – the likely cut of meat processed and sold for hamburger in the recalled batch – is extremely low. Although Crowson said she tries not to „obsess over it," she is fearful that her family could one day become sick. „It's pretty scary," she said.

Because no medical test is available to determine whether a living person is infected with the disease, the couple's „stress and fear cannot be allayed," the lawsuit said. The family seeks unspecified damages for emotional distress and medical monitoring costs. Crowson said her reason for bringing the lawsuit isn't about money. „The more I've thought about this, the angrier I've gotten," she said.

Až za více jak dva měsíce (4.března 2004) se americký tisk začal intenzivně zabývat i „klíčovým svědkem"- veterinářem, který byl hlavním aktérem při zjištění prvního případu BSE. Ten však jak je z následujícího textu patrné- neměl zájem detailněji mluvit o svém „objevu BSE v USA"; viz následující text

*„A key witness in the **criminal investigation announced** by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Inspector General Wednesday likely will be the agency veterinarian who inspected the cow infected with mad cow disease in Washington last December. The veterinarian, Rodney Thompson, is the only witness the USDA has who says the cow in Washington was a downer, meaning it was unable to stand or walk. Three other witnesses who saw the cow the day it was slaughtered -- on Dec. 9 at Vern's Moses Lake Meat Co. In Moses Lake, Wash. – have said the cow was walking. So far, Thompson has not publicly divulged his side of the story and it is uncertain whether under questioning he will maintain the cow was a downer. USDA spokespeople have kept Thompson sequestered from the press and have refused to provide information about him.*

Dave Louthan, the Vern's Moses Lake employee who slaughtered the cow in question, alleges Thompson changed his inspection sheet under duress from USDA management to indicate the animal was a downer after it tested positive for mad cow disease. The alteration was done, Louthan contends, to support the agency's official position that their detection of the infected cow shows their surveillance program – which is based primarily on testing downer animals – is effective.

The USDA Office of Inspector General launched an investigation into the matter in early February, and Inspector General Phyllis K. Fong told a House appropriations subcommittee Wednesday the investigation was focused on „possible alteration of official records." Thompson has not spoken publicly about the issue, but USDA officers have distributed to reporters the Dec. 9 inspection sheet he filled out. It indicates the cow was a downer, although Thompson's signature on the sheet is blacked out. OIG spokesman Austin Chadwick told United Press International the investigation was spurred by a Feb. 3 New York Times article, in which Louthan said the cow was not a downer and alleged the inspection sheet had been changed.

„The USDA made (Thompson) do it," Louthan told UPI, emphasizing Thompson was „a good and honorable man" who would never forge records on his own. If the cow was not a downer, it would raise the larger issue of whether USDA's mad cow surveillance program is

based on faulty premises. Fong said her office had launched a separate investigation that will involve „an audit to review various aspects of USDA‘s response to the discovery of BSE, including the BSE response and surveillance plans.“ The USDA‘s mad cow surveillance program has been in question since the mad cow was first reported Dec. 23, 2003. The ***agency tests so few animals – only about 20,000 out of the 35 million slaughtered each year*** *– some critics have said it is unlikely it could detect mad cow even if it was prevalent in the U.S. herd. UPI reported in January that mad cow testing records for the past two years, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, reveal the agency had not tested any animals in Washington state for the first seven months of 2003.*

If the three eyewitnesses – Louthan, the driver of the trailer that delivered the cow and the co-manager of Vern‘s – are correct and the cow was walking, it raises the possibility that other seemingly healthy but infected cows went undetected and were approved for human c onsumption. This is theoretically possible because hundreds of cows in Europe have tested positive but showed no apparent symptoms of the disease. Thompson‘s inspection sheet shows he did not conduct two screening tests – body temperature and illegal antibiotic residue – that, according to USDA regulations, are considered mandatory for all downers, as previously reported by UPI. Former USDA veterinarians – including Lester Friedlander, who acted as a chief inspector at Taylor Packing in Wyalusing, Pa. – said this indicates the cow was either not a downer or Thompson failed to follow proper protocol. The veterinarians added they thought the latter possibility was unlikely because they never had encountered a situation where they could not get a body temperature and antibiotic residue test on a downer.

In addition, USDA regulations stipulate the cow carcass should have been retained since a mad cow test was being conducted. However, the carcass was processed and sent out to grocery stores more than a week before the positive test results came back. Louthan said he knew Thompson well and often worked „less than a foot away“ from him during his four-and-a-half years at Vern‘s. „He‘s a really good veterinarian. I really liked him,“ said Louthan, who was laid off from Vern‘s shortly after telling reporters the cow in question was not a downer – contrary to Secretary Veneman‘s statements at the time.

„If Doc Thompson made a mistake, he‘s the kind of person who would step up and admit to it,“ he said. ***That is the reason the USDA has not allowed him to talk to the press – because he would be honest and tell the truth*** *– Louthan contended. „If he‘s the same Rodney I‘ve always known, he‘s going to admit to it and say ‚Yeah, I forged the paperwork,‘“ he said. Thompson did not respond to e-mails sent by UPI two weeks ago, and attempts to reach him by phone last week at Vern‘s were unsuccessful.*

Although plant management said Thompson was on the job last Friday, a meat inspector, who later was identified as Donald West, answered the phone line reserved for USDA officials at the plant and told UPI that Thompson had left for the day. West declined to identify himself or comment on the case and abruptly ended the conversation. Louthan said West previously had told him Thompson was given a promotion and bumped up three pay grades in an effort to keep him silent. UPI has been unable to verify any of Louthan‘s allegations, in part because the USDA has refused to give out any information on Thompson. In fact, ***agency officials will not even verify if Thompson is still a USDA employee, saying they cannot comment on an ongoing investigation***.

Asked about the promotion and pay-raise allegations, USDA spokeswoman Alisa Harrison said, „I haven‘t heard of that at all ...I‘m sure that‘s part of what the (Inspector General) is taking a look at.“ Asked whether USDA officials pressured Thompson to alter documents, Harrison replied: „I cannot fathom that would happen ... I would assure you that‘s not something Secretary Veneman would do.“ Harrison declined to comment on the actions that would be taken if the OIG investigation found records had been forged. „I‘m not going to speculate or answer any hypothetical questions,“ she said. „It‘s important to let the investigation proceed.“

*Thompson may soon have to give his account of the mad cow case whether USDA officials want him to or not. The House Government Reform Committee has opened its own investigation into the matter and requested in a Feb. 17 letter to Veneman that she „make available for interviews with our staff the USDA officials who are familiar with the operations at Vern‘s,“ which presumably would include Thompson. Harrison said the agency would comply with the committee‘s request and make Thompson available. „Je intend to fully cooperate with information requests made by the committee,“ she said. A source close to the committee‘s investigation who requested they not be identified, told UPI: „There haven‘t been any new interviews to date, but the investigation is definitely still ongoing and we‘re still interested in talking to people**.“ The source added that Thompson is „certainly an interesting part of the investigation.“***

Avšak ani v Evropě nebylo zapomenuto na zjištění prvního případu BSE v USA. Něco o tomto případu bylo v dubnu 2004 napsáno v mezinárodním časopise „FeedTech“, vydávaném v Holandsku. Autorem článku „Our goal is to see trade resume as quickly as possible“ (Feedtech, 8, 2004 (1): 9-11) je redaktor zmíněného časopisu. Ten se nezmiňuje o podrobnostech „prvního případu“, ale zachází až k záležitostem „politickým“, jak vyplývá z následujícího textu;

„Our goal is to see trade resume as quickly as possible“, that is US Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman´s main task, but if trade will resume as quickly as the industry would like is uncertain. With the first BSE case found in the US, a lot of digging is being done into the credibility of the American feed safety system.

The fact that the first US-found BSE cow, according to DNA tests, originates from Canada indeed helps to open up borders, but does not determine that these borders actually will open up, said the international animal health organization OIE. According to OIE there are more aspects that play a role in re-aquiring BSE-free status. Top USDA officials and industry groups said that foreign countries should lift US beef bans. US-politicians also hammer on the BSE-case being Canadian and demand reopening of markets, but US chief veterinary officer Ron DeHaven does not want to go that far. „It is a North-American case, it was and it stays that way,“ he said.

*In the meantime the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which has not implemented any new safeguards since the BSE-discovery, faces **growing pressure to strengthen its ban on the use of cattle remains in certain animal feed.** While the Agriculture Department(USDA) quickly imposed a series of new food safety rules, FDA officials still hesitated and said they needed time to install extra precautions.*

Three tier firewall

*To keep BSE out of the United States, the federal government in 1997 erected a three-tiered firewall between mad cow disease and the food chain. **First, imports** of cattle from countries that had mad cow disease were banned. Then a national surveillance systém*

including regular inspections was put in place. ***The third tier*** *is the beef by-product feed ban, meaning that the use of cattle remains as an ingredient in feed for cattle, sheep and goats is prohibited.* ***Up until now, Americans did eat bovine central nervous systém tissue****, hidden in hot dogs, hamburgers, pizza toppings and taco fillings. Experts say the best way to prevent mad cow disease is to ban so-called high risk material (brain and spinal cord) from human food and animal feed. „Muscle tissue or similar cuts of meats are safe. Research shows that the prion, which is the infective agent that causes BSE, is not found in skeletal muscle tissue. The infective agent is largely in the brain and spinal cord and a few other tissues not normally consumed by humans in this country", DeHaven said. The powerful National Cattlemen´s Beef Association echoes this opinion.*

Backdoor transmission

The USDA has banned brains and spinal cord from older cattle from the food supply, but the FDA continues to allow these high risk materials to be rendered into feed for pigs and chicknes. Here´s where the critics step in. Not everyone is quite confident either about the holiness of the firewall or the science supporting it. Critics of the FDA´s feed policy note that the 1997 regulations cover only ruminants, unlike a much broader ban in Europe that prohibits using mammalian animal protein in feed used for any farmed livestock,including poultry and pigs. According to consumer groups, the FDA has taken half measures that leave open back doors for the potential transmission of the disease. Pigs and chicken are still allowed to consume feed containing ruminant protein. Furthemore, in the US it is allowed to process chicken waste from the grower house which contain excreta, feathers and sometimes up to 30% spilled feed, into cattle fed. This way, indirectly cattle wind up eating cattle, which eventually ends up on the consumer´s dining table. That is why consumer groups advocate the precautionary principle of a complete ban on mammalian protein in all feed for food animals.

*Industry insiders say that there is no scientific evidence that a complete ban would enhance feed safety for other species. They perceive a complete ban as an emotional or political decision****. But there is much that scientists admit they do not know or understand about the prion that was discovered by Dr Stanley Prusiner in 1982.***

There are also a considerable number of researchers that believe that BSE is not caused by prions, but suspect an unidentified, slow-acting virus. With so much unknown, it seems a dangerous policy to leave open to potential modes of transmission.

Costly alternatives

Would it be possible to replace all animal-based products in feed with plant-based or synthetic alternatives? Yes, but the result would probably mean higher costs to raise cattle. Cattle would also grow slower or produce less milk on a full vegetable diet. But there might be bigger problems than cost.

Each year, the US poultry and beef industries generate almost 25 million tones of raw animal tissue that is not utilized for food. Whole industries have developed to recycle the inedible remains of cows, mainly into animal feed. If that is no longer possible, these parts could be burned, buried or composted, but that would generate new problems, most on a scale far greater than the potential threat of BSE in the US.

So far the FDA states that the current ruminant to ruminant feed ban exceeds 99% among the country´s 12,000 feedmills, rendering plants and other facilities covered by the ban. However the BSE case has urged the USDA to add new measures to protect against BSE. These are;

- *Downer cattle are prohibited to enter the food chain*
- *A hold on BSE tested cattle until confirmation they are disease-free*
- *Enhanced restrictions on the use of gigh-risk animal tissue (skull, eyes and neurological tissue of cattle over 30 months old)*
- *Restriction on the use of mechanically separed meat in human food and*
- *Use of air-injection stunning to prevent brain tissue being dislocated on the carcass.*

Strangely enough it is still legal to use blood and milk in ruminant feed. There is also no simple test for identifying banned protein from ruminant feeed.

Back to politics

BSE is not only about human health and economics, but also about politics. The Bush administration does not do its utmost to regulate the industry. Not so long ago the Agriculture Department opposition and the Republican majority leadership in Congress frustrated attempts to prohibit downer cattle from being added to the food chain, a measure now finally accepted.

There is good reason, since agribusiness contributed over USD 4.4 million to Bush´s political campaigns, which puts the sector into the top ten industry sectors of lifetime contributors to his campaigns. In the year 2000 the livestock industry contributed USD 4.7 million to political campaigns, of which 79% went to Republicans.

No wonder the system for checking cattle feed is flawed. Federal inspectors rarely sample the actual feed to test for banned materials. It is a paper inspection. Inspectors walk through each facility making sure feedbags are labelled properly and check records on equipment cleaning and other plant processes. Producers only have to retain records for one year, which is a relatively short period given the fact that BSE has an incubation period of four to six years.

If the mad cow scare continues, pressure will be put on the FDA to further tighten some parts of the feed ban. The measure will likely include banning the use of using poultry excrement, preventing cattle-feed producers from also handling prohibited material, banning brain and spinal tissue from all feed and outlawing table waste from restaurants for use in cattle feed.

US government´s assumptions that the feed ban has worked are meaningless, because so few cattle have been tested for BSE. In practice it has become obvious that no other country has just one cow. More data are needed and unfortunately that can only be achieved within a real population (ZIGGERS, 2004).

Avšak i druhý v USA zjištěný případ BSE (stát Texas) byl rovněž zajímavý. Ne však již tak kuriozní. Maso této nebezpečnými priony „infikované krávy“ si již údajně nedostalo na řeznické pulty v USA. Zástupce USDA **24.června 2005** oznámil, že od britské laboratoře ve Weybridge obdrželi výsledek, potvrzující další výskyt BSE. Zajímavé na tom bylo to, že se jednalo o **vzorek nervové tkáně od krávy, která již před sedmi měsíci, v listopadu 2004 byla odporažena (byla však „zablokována pro výživu lidí“)** . Tato zajímavá testace se vyvíjela následovně; počáteční „screeningový test“ z listopadu 2004 byl „dubiozní“, takže USDA nechalo provést IHC testy . Ty však byly negativní. I tak však bylo provedeno další vyšetření (již 7 měsíců starého vzorku) Western-blot testem, ukazující opět na možnost pozitivity. Po zaslání vzorku do laboratoře ve Weybridge , byla pozitivita BSE potvrzena. Viz následující text, blíže situaci popisující;

„Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has received final test results from The Veterinary Laboratories Agency in Weybridge, England, confirming that a sample from an animal that was blocked from the food supply in November 2004 has tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Johanns also directed USDA scientists to work with international experts to thoughtfully develop a new protocol that includes performing dual confirmatory tests in the event of another "inconclusive" BSE screening test.

"We are currently testing nearly 1,000 animals per day as part of our BSE enhanced surveillance program, more than 388,000 total tests, and this is the first confirmed case resulting from our surveillance," Johanns said. "I am encouraged that our interlocking safeguards are working exactly as intended. This animal was blocked from entering the food

supply because of the firewalls we have in place. Americans have every reason to continue to be confident in the safety of our beef."

Effective immediately, if another BSE rapid screening test results in inconclusive findings, USDA will run both an IHC and Western blot confirmatory test. If results from either confirmatory test are positive, the sample will be considered positive for BSE.

"I want to make sure we continue to give consumers every reason to be confident in the health of our cattle herd," Johanns said. "By adding the second confirmatory test, we boost that confidence and bring our testing in line with the evolving worldwide trend to use both IHC and Western blot together as confirmatory tests for BSE."

USDA has initiated an epidemiological investigation to determine the animal's herd of origin. That investigation is not yet complete. ***The animal was born before the United States instituted a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban in August 1997,*** *which prevents the use of most mammalian protein in cattle feed. According to internationally accepted research, feed containing meat-and-bone meal is the primary way BSE is transferred to the cattle population.*

The animal was selected for testing because, as a non-ambulatory animal, it was considered to be at higher risk for BSE. *An* ***initial screening test*** *on the animal in* ***November 2004*** *was inconclusive, triggering USDA to conduct the internationally accepted confirmatory IHC tests.* ***Those test results were negative****. Earlier this month, USDA's Office of the Inspector General recommended* ***further testing of the seven-month-old sample*** *using another internationally recognized confirmatory test, the Western blot. Unlike the IHC, the Western blot was reactive, prompting USDA to send samples from the animal to the Weybridge laboratory for further analysis.*

The laboratory in Weybridge, England, is recognized by the World Animal Health Organization, or OIE, as a world reference laboratory for BSE. Weybridge officials this week conducted a combination of rapid, IHC and Western blot testing on tissue samples from the animal in question. At the same time these diagnostic tests were being run by Weybridge, USDA conducted its own additional tests.

As a non-ambulatory, or "downer" animal, the cow was prohibited from entering the human food supply, under an interim final rule in effect since January 2004. Research has shown that BSE is most likely to be found in older non-ambulatory cattle, animals showing signs of central nervous system disorders, injured or emaciated animals, and cattle that have died for unexplained reasons. USDA's testing program targets these groups of animals for testing.

The system of human health protections includes the USDA ban on specified risk materials, or SRM's, from the food supply. SRM's are most likely to contain the BSE agent if it is present in an animal. Additional measures, such as a longstanding ban on importing cattle and beef products from high-risk countries, a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban, U.S. slaughter practices, and aggressive surveillance provide a series of interlocking safeguards to protect U.S. consumers and animal health.

USDA remains committed to protecting both U.S. consumers and U.S. livestock from BSE, and to that end continues efforts to detect the disease through its enhanced BSE surveillance program. Once sufficient data from the surveillance program has been accumulated, USDA will consult with outside experts to analyze it and determine whether any changes to existing risk management measures are necessary.

This confirmed case of BSE in no way impacts the safety of our nation's food supply. As the epidemiological investigation progresses, USDA will continue to communicate findings in a

timely and transparent manner.“

Nedávno, 13. března 2006 byl u další krávy (stát Alabama) zjištěn a několika testy potvrzen třetí a opět „kuriozní“ případ BSE**.** V tomto případě však již lze bezpečně vyloučit, že by se maso krávy dostalo do potravního řetězce. Bylo to tím, že příslušná kráva těžce onemocněla, takže **místní veterinář provedl euthanázii. Kuriozní však je to, že kráva byla na farmě „zakopána“ a později „exhumována“**. Zda byly vzorky nervové tkáně odebrány až po exhumaci krávy nebo ne, lze obtížně z amerického tisku zjistit. V tomto případě zřejmě již nebylo k dispozici „ušní číslo“, protože se lze dočíst, že úředníci pod vedením USDA již obtížněji zjišťovali původ krávy (odkud byla nakoupena, identifikační „ušní číslo“…). Takže „dohledávání“ kohorty zvířat se stejnou krmnou dávkou bude zřejmě ještě zdlouhavější až nemožné, ve srovnání s prvním případem, až v Kanadě nalezeným původem BSE. Viz následující text ze 13.března 2006;

"We received a positive result on a Western blot confirmatory test conducted at the USDA laboratories in Ames, Iowa, on samples from an animal that had tested "inconclusive" on a rapid screening test performed on Friday, March 10.

"The samples were taken from a ***non-ambulatory animal on a farm in Alabama****. A local private veterinarian euthanized and sampled the animal and sent the samples for further testing, which was conducted at one of our contract diagnostic laboratories at the University of Georgia. The* ***animal was buried on the farm and it did not enter the animal or human food chains.***

"We are now working with Alabama animal health officials to conduct an ***epidemiological investigation to gather any further information we can on the herd of origin of this animal. The animal had only resided on the most recent farm in Alabama for less than a year.***

"We will be working to locate animals from this cow's birth cohort (animals born in the same herd within one year of the affected animal) and any offspring. We will also work with Food and Drug Administration officials to ***determine any feed history that may be relevant to the investigation.*** *Experience worldwide has shown us that it is highly unusual to find BSE in more than one animal in a herd or in an affected animal's offspring. Nevertheless, all animals of interest will be tested for BSE.*

"While epidemiological work to determine the animal's precise age is just getting underway and is ongoing, the attending veterinarian has indicated that, based on dentition, it ***was an older animal, quite possibly upwards of 10 years of age. This would indicate that this animal would have been born prior to the implementation of the Food and Drug Administration's 1997 feed ban****. Older animals are more likely to have been exposed to contaminated feed circulating before the FDA's 1997 ban on ruminant-to-ruminant feeding practices, which scientific research has indicated is the most likely route for BSE transmission.*

"By any measure, the incidence of BSE in this country is extremely low. Our enhanced surveillance program was designed as a one-time snapshot to provide information about the level of prevalence of BSE in the United States. We have conducted surveillance in the United States since 1990 and following the initial positive in December 2003, we developed an

enhanced surveillance program. ***Since June 2004, all sectors of the cattle industry have cooperated in this program by submitting samples from more than 650,000 animals from the highest risk populations and more than 20,000 from clinically normal, older animals, as part*** *our enhanced BSE surveillance program. To date, including the animal in today's announcement, only two of these highest risk animals have tested positive for the disease as part of the enhanced surveillance program.*

Americký denní tisk pokračuje 15.března 2006 seznámením s některými dalšími zajímavostmi, po zjištění třetího případu BSE v USA; viz následující text;

On Monday (March 13,2006) after a more thorough test at US Department of Agriculture (USDA) labs in Ames, Iowa, officials confirmed that the ***animal (which had been euthanized by a veterinarian and buried on the farm) had mad cow disease.*** *USDA officials now are trying to trace the cow's herd of origin and offspring.*

*Mad cow, known scientifically as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is believed to be carried by animal feed made from cattle brains or spinal cord. Such feed is now banned in the US and other countries, but cases of BSE have continued to appear around the world. Although medical authorities attribute 150 deaths in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s to the human form of the disease, no such human cases have been reported in the United States. Since the first case of BSE was reported here in 2003, the number of cattle tested for the disease has increased substantially. Still****, only about 650,000 of the total US herd (some 35 million slaughtered annually) have been tested - a rate far lower than the percentage tested in Europe or Japan.*** *Of those tested, two have turned up positive for BSE. That is "evidence that* ***the prevalence of this disease in the United States is extremely low,****" says Terry Stokes, chief executive officer of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. "The bottom line for consumers remains the same," Mr. Stokes says. "Your beef is safe."That's the same position taken by USDA officials, who are responsible for ensuring the safety of agricultural products as well as* ***promoting the $48 billion beef industry here and abroad.***

Cows origin and age difficult to trace

The USDA's inspector general ***last month found problems in sampling for and tracking of mad cow disease. For example, there was difficulty tracing the origin and age of cattle****, which are critical factors for determining patterns of risk. Sen. Tom Harkin (D) of Iowa and others have called for a national animal identification system. Public-interest groups say this week's news indicates the weakness of the current system of testing and detection. "We applaud the farmer who* ***did the right thing by turning over the sick cow in question to a veterinarian for testing,****" says Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch, a nonprofit consumer group in Washington. "But this is* ***still a voluntary system*** *that must be made mandatory for the sake of public health," Mr. Hauter says. Without a mandatory reporting system, who knows what else is out there?"*

*In 2003, the USDA issued an emergency rule banning so-called "downer" cattle (those too sick or injured to walk on their own) from the human food supply. Public- interest groups are pushing proposals in Congress that would make that ban permanent and extend it to pigs and other livestock. "****There is no reason to play Russian roulette with the food supply****, nor is there any reason to torment nonambulatory livestock by dragging or pushing them into*

slaughterhouses with chains, bulldozers, or forklifts," says Wayne Pacelle, president of the Humane Society of the United States.

***Cases of mad cow are never good news for the beef industry, but this one came at a particularly delicate time**. After the first US case of mad cow disease in 2003, Japan banned US beef. The ban had been lifted, but in January, Japan (once the largest importer of US beef) again halted imports after veal cuts from the US were found to contain backbone material. With this week's news, South Korea also may delay re-opening its market to US beef imports. This week's discovery of a cow in Alabama with BSE came just as Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns was meeting with Japanese officials at a trade conference in London.*

V souvislosti s tímto již třetím a jak je zřejmé opět ne zcela bezchybným odhalením jednoho z nejnebezpečnějších infekčních onemocnění přenosného ze zvířat na člověka- rozpoutala se již mohutnější kritika i ze strany prostých Američanů. Nevadí jim zřejmě tolik dohledávání původu zvířat jako to, proč oni jako příslušníci státu, který již od roku 1990 disponuje obrovským diagnostickým potenciálem při detekci „šílených krav"- proč mají jíst hovězí maso, které tam mají na řeznických pultech v podstatě na BSE nevyšetřeno. Ještě zajímavější však je to, že jedna „ hovězí společnost" v Kansasu má zájem porážený skot 100% testovat, státní úředníci (USDA) však nemají o tuto aktivitu zájem, jak je patrné z následujícího textu (8.května 2006):

*"A ranching and meat-processing company in **Kansas wants to test all its cattle** for mad cow disease at its own expense. The Bush **administration won't let the firm do it**. Oh, but that's not all. If the **company tries to buy the $20 testing kits**, the feds will treat such a transaction as **an illegal purchase of a controlled** substance. We wish we were making this up, but we're not. Talk about mad cow, this is crazy people. It's also an intrusive government abusing an old law. In 1913, when cholera was decimating hog herds, scam artists were selling fake serums to farmers. Congress responded with the Viruses, Serums, Toxins, Anti-Toxins and Analogous Products Act. It gave the federal government authority to regulate diagnostic testing devices for farm animals.*

*The Bush administration rediscovered this law when the Kansas company, Creekstone Farms, **announced plans to test its entire herd for mad cow disease**. The company was willing to go far and beyond the government's test regimen to reassure its customers in places such as Japan. Private companies make these test kits and there is nothing dangerous about them. Still, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says ranchers such as Creekstone Farms can't buy them. Creekstone Farms is a victim of a much larger debate over the nation's limited testing of its beef supply. The **USDA tests about 1 percent of the nation's beef cattle** for mad cow disease. That sampling, the government and large meatpacking companies say, is plenty. Many other nations, especially those that import our beef, test a far greater percentage of their herds. **Japan requires 100percent testing.***

*Creekstone Farms once sold its high-end Angus beef (no growth hormones, no antibiotics) to Japan. Now it can't because of this mad cow disease testing dispute between Japan and the Bush administration. Nor can Creekstone Farms voluntarily test 100percent of its cattle, because the USDA has cut off the supply of thetest kits. In business, the customer is always right. The Bush administration is wrong to deny Creekstone's customers — whether in Topeka or in Tokyo — access to tested beef. **So, Creekstone is suing the USDA.** The*

administration likes to tout "free market" solutions to big problems. Creekstone came up with a good one. It's crazy not to let the firm pursue it.“

Z dalšího textu vyplývá snaha státních úředníků zachovat dosavadní „nízký stupeň BSE testace, jak je patrné ze 24.května a z 9. června 2006, následovně:
The U.S. Department of Agriculture doesn't conduct 100 percent testing for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) because the test is meaningless when used on younger animals. There is no food-safety test for BSE and testing cannot guarantee an animal is BSE-free. Scientific evidence tells us that the average incubation time for BSE is five years and isn't detectable until a few months before an animal shows signs of the illness.

***Animals in the United States generally are slaughtered at 18 to 20 months old**. The USDA targets for testing those animals most likely to have the disease, such as older animals showing clinical signs. The real protection for consumers is not based on testing, but on our system of safeguards, the most important being the ban on specified risk materials from the food supply, and the Food and Drug Administration's ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban.*

Since June 1, 2004, the USDA has tested more than 700,000 of the most-at-risk animals, with only two animals testing positive, adding up to three cases in the United States. We can say, based on science, that the prevalence of BSE in the United States is extraordinarily low.

Tisk z 9.června 2006

The U.S. Department of Agriculture now believes the only two native-born U.S. cows to contract mad-cow disease were infected with a little understood and rare "atypical" strain that throws into question how the animals were infected.
USDA Chief Veterinarian John Clifford told Dow Jones Newswires this week that the latest two cases of BSE in the U.S. - found in Alabama and Texas are abnormal, differing from the common form of the disease found in Canada and the U.K.
Clifford also said USDA has no plans to change the way it safeguards the U.S. beef supply.
An internal USDA memo stated, "There is no evidence to justify any changes in surveillance methods, disease control, or public health measures already taken in the United States."
Clifford agreed, saying, "Until the science proves otherwise, we'll be treating all of these cases as BSE and the normal, typical BSE, and we still feel confident that the safeguards we have in place are effective."
USDA regulations ban beef from non-ambulatory, or "downer," animals from the human food supply as well as require that some bovine tissue - such as brain and spinal cord material - considered to be risky for carrying BSE infection be removed before processing.
The U.S. also guards against cattle infection by prohibiting the feeding of bovine material to cattle because of the belief that BSE is spread solely through contaminated feed.
But this "atypical" form of bovine spongiform encephalopathy found in the U.S. might not be spread through feed.
Clifford said he didn't know if the two U.S. cows were infected through contaminated feed - as most normal cases are - or whether they simply developed the disease spontaneously or by some other way.

There are different theories, Clifford said. "There may be spontaneous cases, but I can't say that there are or are not at this point in time."
*Linda Detwiler, a consultant to major food companies and former Agriculture Department veterinary disease specialist, said, "**There is so much that is unknown about the cases now."***
There are several theories as to how cattle could develop an atypical form of BSE, if it even is BSE that the Alabama and Texas cows contracted, Detwiler said.
Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy, or TSE, is the umbrella neurological disease category that BSE - also called mad cow disease - falls under, together with the scrapie, traditionally found in sheep.
And one possibility, Detwiler said, is the cows could be contracting a form of sheep TSE, now believed to be transmissable to cattle.
Two things that do seem certain,she said,are that the atypical disease contracted by two U.S. cows can transmit infection and it is detectable by current forms of testing.
She said French scientists have been successful in using atypical BSE to infect mice, but much is still unknown about transmissibility between cattle or if that is even possible.
The USDA memo said the abnormal BSE found in the Texas and Alabama cows "had different molecular characteristics (from normal BSE) that are similar to a few described cases in France."
Clifford, talking about the two infected native-born cows, said "there was abnormal prion protein present." And the cows' brains didn't have "the spongiform lesions that you would typically see" in the brains of a traditional BSE case.
"One important question," USDA said in the memo, "is whether the different types of atypical BSE are transmissible to cattle, and no such evaluations have been done."
The only traditional case of the more common variety of BSE found in the U.S. was discovered in Washington state in December 2003. That cow, according to USDA, was born and infected in Canada before being sent south to the U.S. Canadian and U.S. officials tracked down the source of infection for that cow and other Canadian animals to contaminated feed produced in western Canada. But in regards to the native-born BSE cases, USDA said, "There are many unanswered questions about these unusual findings, and additional research is needed to help characterize the significance - or lack of significance - of any of these findings."

Spor “hovězí společnosti” v Kansasu se státními úředníky pokračuje, jak je patrné ze 24.května 2006, následovně:

A small U.S. meatpacker will have three more weeks, until July 14, to file court documents asking for an immediate end to the federal monopoly on mad-cow tests, a U.S. district court judge decided on Tuesday.

Creekstone Farms Premium Beef LLC wants to test all of its cattle for brain-wasting mad cow disease, saying it would give customers in nations like Japan confidence in U.S. beef. The Agriculture Department says the tests are a food safety matter, not a marketing gimmick.

The packer originally was scheduled to file its motion for summary judgment by June 23, to be followed by a similar motion from USDA. Motions for summary judgment ask a judge to conclude a case is so lopsided the victor can be chosen without a trial.

The new schedule for the case is:

--July 14, deadline for Creekstone to file for summary judgment.

--August 25, deadline for USDA to move for summary judgment and oppose the Creekstone motion.

--September 15, deadline for Creekstone to file supporting materials for its motion and to oppose the USDA motion.

--October 6, deadline for USDA to submit documents in support of its motion.

Spor mezi „hovězí společností“ a USDA dále pokračuje (27.července 2006), jak je patrné z následujícího textu;

Just because Japan has partially re-opened its market to U.S. beef doesn't mean Creekstone Farms Premium Beef is dropping its lawsuit against USDA. That lawsuit aims to force the Agency to allow Creekstone to voluntarily test 100% of its beef production for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).
Creekstone CEO John Stewart said he's happy about the Japanese announcement, but still wants to test all of Creekstone's cattle for BSE. "We are committed still, after the market's open, to getting the green light from USDA to privately test. And as you know, we have this working through the court system now," Stewart said.
According to Stewart, Creekstone is pressing ahead with its lawsuit against USDA because its customers in Japan want 100% BSE testing. "We're still paying attention to our customers and their request," he said. "And specifically in Japan we know that Japanese consumers there have some pretty significant concerns about the safety of U.S. beef."
Stewart says he doesn't share those concerns, but does have concerns about USDA's overall BSE testing policy. He says USDA's position is that BSE testing isn't about food safety, but about detecting the prevalence of the disease in the U.S. cattle herd. Stewart questions that logic. "There are a lot of scientific experts out there that would disagree, significantly disagree, with USDA on this issue, and Creekstone disagrees as well," he said.
Stewart is particularly critical of USDA's decision last week to dramatically scale-back its enhanced BSE testing program from 750,000 to 40,000 animals annually, a move Stewart said came "at the least opportune time" to facilitate reliable beef trade between the U.S. and Japan, and the U.S. and South Korea, too.

Creekstone first asked USDA for permission to test all its cattle for BSE two years ago, and after USDA said no repeatedly, Creekstone filed suit in the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia two months ago. According to Stewart, Creekstone has filed a motion for summary judgment against USDA, and a decision on that motion could come as soon as October.

Spor mezi „hovězí společností“ a USDA ještě dále pokračuje (12. srpna 2006), jak je patrné z následujícího textu;

Stewart, founder and CEO of Creekstone Farms Premium Beef, sued the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the right to test every animal slaughtered at his plant for mad cow disease.

The lawsuit has placed Creekstone -- a cutting-edge meat packer 25 miles north of Ponca City -- in the national spotlight. Stewart has appeared on National Public Radio to plead his case.

Other media have interviewed him, and interest groups and lawmakers have joined the fray with their opinions.

The USDA says it has legal jurisdiction over mad cow testing. But Stewart says the agency isn't taking the mad cow threat seriously enough.

In fact, Stewart said he plans to form a worldwide panel of experts this year to study the disease and make judgments about its risks and prevalence in the U.S. He said he would share the results with the USDA.

"Whether the government does anything about it or not, that's their choice," Stewart said in an interview. "We want to plan our direction and strategy on facts we get from world experts, not based on what the USDA is telling us, because I think the USDA's information is too editorialized."

Mad cow is also called BSE, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The disease killed 150 people in England during an outbreak in the 1990s and has been found in a handful of countries, including the U.S. and Canada.

People can develop variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, a highly fatal brain disorder, by eating meat contaminated with mad cow disease. The first U.S. case of mad cow was found in 2003 in a cow imported from Canada, prompting nearly 60 countries to halt imports of American beef.

The USDA has been at odds with Stewart since 2004, when he first started asking to perform his own BSE testing.

The agency has tested nearly 800,000 animals in the past two years and found only two cases of BSE -- in June 2005 in Texas, and last March in Alabama.

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns proclaimed in July that the nation's beef supply was safe. Then he announced plans to cut the USDA's BSE testing to 40,000 animals per year -- less than 1 percent of the 35 million cattle slaughtered annually.

That rate is far below that of most developed countries who test for BSE but higher than standards set by the World Organization for Animal Health.

"There is no significant BSE problem in the United States. And after all of this surveillance, I am able to say there never was," Johanns told reporters last month. "Those who are trying to convince their consumers that universal testing or 100 percent testing somehow solves the problem really are misleading."

Stewart's battle with the USDA stems from 2003, when he was invited to speak about the international beef trade at a USDA conference. On Dec. 23 of that year -- two months before the speech -- the first U.S. case of BSE was found in Washington state, in a cow imported from Canada.

When Stewart spoke -- in front of a throng of reporters and USDA officials -- he announced plans for Creekstone to test every animal slaughtered at its plant.

At the time, Stewart said, he viewed his company's policy as a tool to reassure customers. Instead, it created an uproar.

The next morning, a senior USDA veterinarian announced that her agency had sole authority to control the sale and use of BSE tests. The agency said its authority comes from the Virus Serum Toxins Act, passed in 1913 to stop scam artists from making bogus serums to cure hog cholera.

Jim Rogers, a spokesman for the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said the act doesn't stop Creekstone from performing BSE tests, but it forbids the sale of the test kits to unapproved parties.

The foreign ban on U.S. beef hit Creekstone hard. A third of the plant's sales were overseas, and 70 percent of those sales were wrapped up in Japan, the largest U.S. beef customer at the time.

With Japan out of the picture, the company's lucrative market for less desirable beef cuts -- like short ribs, tongue, skirt steak and strip loin -- disappeared. Creekstone had to cut production and lay off 150 people.

Angry and frustrated, Stewart met five times in 2004 with the staff of then-Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman. He eventually was told that testing all of Creekstone's animals was "not scientifically warranted" and he could not proceed.

Stewart was rebuffed again during a face-to-face meeting with Johanns in 2005.

One problem with Stewart's idea, Rogers said, is the possibility of false positives. If a beef plant publicly reported a BSE case, trade routes might close before the USDA could confirm the results.

"If a company says their meat is BSE-free, it doesn't mean anything because the incubation time is so long -- it doesn't show up except in older animals," Rogers said.

But Stewart believes private testing means plenty. Creekstone has lost more than $100 million since late 2003, he said. His company spent $500,000 in 2004 to build a state-of-the-art BSE testing lab, and several employees traveled to France for training.

Creekstone's lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., derided the USDA's legal arguments against voluntary testing as "implausible, illogical, inconsistent and counterintuitive."

The lawsuit challenges the UDSA's authority to block Creekstone from obtaining the test kits and asks Judge James Robertson to allow private companies to voluntarily test all animals for BSE. The lawsuit also requests that the USDA be appointed to oversee surveillance efforts of private plants.

The testing would cost Creekstone about $6 million a year, or $20 per animal.

The USDA hasn't formally responded to the suit. Requests for comment were referred by Johanns' press office to Rogers, who said he couldn't comment on pending litigation.

Creekstone's shipments of beef to Japan resumed last week but are nowhere near 2003 levels. Teams of Japanese inspectors spent two days at Creekstone in May, poring over records and touring the 500,000-square-foot plant.

The road ahead for the U.S. beef industry is tough, Stewart said, especially in Asia.

Beef consumption in Japan has shrunk from 11.5 pounds per person each year to 7 pounds, and Australia's market share in Japan more than doubled while U.S. beef was banned.

Additionally, Stewart said experts are predicting a beef surplus of 1 billion pounds in the U.S. by 2008, making international markets even more critical.

Voluntary testing, he said, would give producers a marketing weapon in a turbulent world economy.

"If we were BSE testing, we wouldn't have to go through any of this," Stewart said. "Japanese consumers would be happy. We would have record exports to Japan and Korea, higher cattle prices for ranchers, and we would be attacking the Australians head on.

"Tell me something bad about BSE testing, other than the fact the government doesn't want us doing it."…

V USA stále probíhá debata o tom, že o 100% testování skotu na BSE (jako tomu je například v ČR) se neuvažuje. Takže ani „výstražné výzvy" od Japonců a FAO výše uvedené, v podstatě nic „neposunuly" dále, po zjištění prvního případu BSE v USA. Důvodem je to, že Spojené státy nejsou tak „bohaté", aby si mohly dovolit každý týden na „BSE testaci" vynakládat jeden milion USD, jak vyplývá z následujícího textu (21. a 22. července 2006):

The Agriculture Department is cutting its tests for mad cow disease about 90 percent, drawing protests from consumer groups.

The current testing level -- 1,000 each day -- reflects the heightened concern that followed the discovery in December 2003 of mad cow disease in the United States.

Since then, tests have turned up two more cases of the disease, known medically as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE. The government says there may be a handful of undetected cases.

"It's time that our surveillance efforts reflect what we now know is a very, very low level of BSE in the United States," Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said Thursday. Critics say now is not the time to scale back on the testing, which has cost the government an estimated $1 million per week.

Consumers Union advocates testing every animal slaughtered in the United States.

The current level of 1,000 tests each day represents about 1 percent of the 35 million cattle slaughtered annually in this country. Beginning around late August, the new level will be about 110 tests per day.

"If you do testing of 100 percent of your animals, any ones that test positive never go into the food chain," said Michael Hansen of Consumers Union. "That's in part why they do it in Europe, because they've seen animals that look perfectly fine, and they catch them just before they go to slaughter."

Johanns said testing has nothing to do with the safety of U.S. beef for consumers in the United States and abroad. From a food safety standpoint, the real key is removing at slaughter those cattle parts known to carry mad cow disease, Johanns said.

USDA prepares to scale back mad-cow surveillance tests; 19 July 2006

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is preparing to scale back its mad-cow disease testing program now that it says it is convinced the presence of the disease here is minimal.
USDA is expected to announce the decision as early as Thursday. USDA Wednesday issued an advisory that the announcement would be made Thursday, but spokespersons said that may be delayed.
USDA said in April that it believes the mad-cow disease prevalence is less than one in 1 million adult cattle in the U.S.
The USDA sharply boosted the number of cattle it was testing for mad-cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, in response to the first discovery of BSE in the U.S. in December 2003.
The effort, an enhanced BSE surveillance program, was designed to assess the prevalence of BSE in U.S. herds. It began June 1, 2004, and USDA has tested more than 750,000 cattle since the program began.
One U.S. government official said Wednesday that the USDA intends to drop the cattle-testing level down to about 40,000 per year - a number consistent with international standards. That matches what Ron DeHaven, head of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said in April.
It was also in April that USDA Secretary Mike Johanns told reporters that the prevalence of mad-cow disease in the U.S. is "extraordinarily low."

22.července 2006:

The United States will cut testing for mad cow disease by 90 percent, but Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns thinks Japan and other trading partners will not object to the decision.

Johanns claims the move will bring surveillance in line with "a very, very low level" of mad cow disease in the United States, and in Japan "there really shouldn't be any reaction."

Japan, in fact, will likely lift a ban on US beef by next week, though it wants tests to stay at the current level.

As Johanns sees it, the United States has agreed to limit shipments to beef from animals younger than 20 months - an age at which mad cow disease is not found in cattle - and trading partners should "recognize that we have bent over backwards."

Tom Harkin, senior Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee, said he hoped Johanns is right but "the Japanese appear ready to take advantage of any gap as an excuse to drag out this trade dispute further."

Indeed, **critics said now is not the time to scale back on testing, which costs the US government an estimated US$1 million (HK$7.8 million) per week.** "It surely will not encourage consumers in the US or Japan to rush to the store to buy more beef," said Carol Tucker-Foreman of the Consumer Federation of America.

A second group, Consumers Union, advocates testing every animal slaughtered in the United States.

"If you do testing of 100 percent of your animals, any ones that test positive never go into the food chain," said Michael Hansen of Consumers Union. "That's in part why they do it in Europe - because they've seen animals that look perfectly fine and they catch them just before they go to slaughter."

From a food safety standpoint, Johanns said, the key is removing cattle parts known to carry mad cow disease.

During a European outbreak that peaked in 1993, bovine spongiform encephalopathy hit more than 180,000 cows and was blamed for 150 human deaths. Humans can get a related disease, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, by eating BSE-tainted meat.

The current US test level - 1,000 each day - reflects concern after the discovery in 2003 of mad cow disease, the first of three cases.

Někteří „aktivisté“ v USA vyžadují odstraňování „Specifického rizikového materiálu“ (SRM) od skotu mladšího jak 30 měsíců, jak je patrné z následujícího textu, následovně (26.července 2006);

The U.S. government virtually eliminated the threat of mad cow disease to consumers by requiring the removal of brains, spinal cords and other high risk items from older cattle, the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis said on Tuesday.

Two consumer groups applauded the progress but said the Agriculture Department was unwilling to take the more stringent steps suggested by an international advisory panel, **such as banning high-risk materials from cattle 12 months or older from food and feed use.**

Mad cow disease is a fatal, brain-wasting disease believed to be spread by contaminated feed. People can contract a human version of the disease by eating tainted meats. With only three cases of mad cow found in the country, USDA says the risk of mad cow is very low.

"Removing high risk tissues, often called specified risk materials or SRMs, **from animals over 30 months of age almost completely eliminates potential human exposure**," the center said in an update to its 2003 study, commissioned by USDA.

Consumer activists said the government could do more, **such as setting a lower age level for SRM removal.**

"USDA hasn't followed the most proactive approach," said Caroline Smith DeWaal, director of food safety with the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "We've got a ways to go."

She said in addition to expanding the SRM ban, USDA must implement a nationwide traceback system to find herdmates of suspect livestock when there is a disease outbreak.

Added Mike Hansen, a spokesman with Consumers Union: "It does appear that the model is basically designed to tell the USDA what it wants to hear ... that doing anything more stringent doesn't get you any further."

In its report, the center said two other USDA measures - banning "downer" cattle too ill to walk and the use of so-called advanced meat recovery equipment - also were helpful but to a lesser degree than SRM removal.

"SRM removal is it, but there are some other things that increase, that help," Richard Raymond, USDA under secretary for food safety, told reporters. "The banning of the downer cattle is one of the things that helps reduce the risk," he added.

USDA quickly moved to ban meat from downer animals in the human food supply soon after the United States discovered its first case of mad cow disease in Washington state in December 2003. The rule was temporary, but Raymond said USDA was working on a final proposal.

The removal of downer cattle reduced human exposure to mad cow disease by about 3 percent, the study found.

The Harvard study also evaluated two steps suggested for upcoming revisions to the Food and Drug Administration's feed rule - a ban on use of cattle blood and barring feed mills from using the same equipment to make feed containing the high-risk materials and feed without them. It found neither would have a major impact on the spread of mad cow.