

Mad Cow Disease

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MAD Cow Disease, known scientifically as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle, is an incurable spongy degeneration of the brain and central nervous system. A similar complex disease in humans, known as Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), acts like an accelerated form of Alzheimer's, and is characterized by an irreversible degeneration of brain tissue--holes formed in the brain, disabling and finally killing the victim. The fear of this unusually cruel and fatal neurological disease has sent shock waves throughout Europe and around the globe, creating one of the biggest consumer panics ever experienced in the industrialized world.

Q. How do cattle and humans contract this disease?

A. For decades British and North American farmers have been feeding their beef and dairy cattle, which are of course herbivores, cheap protein supplements made from things which include sheep brains, spinal cords, and other animal parts. Sheep, as any farmer will testify, have for centuries carried scrapie--a fatal, degenerative brain disease, which is remarkably similar to Mad Cow Disease and CJD. It is feared that this disease can be transmitted to humans who eat meat from infected cattle.

Since 1989 Britain has banned sheep offal (the ground remains of the dead animal) from cattle feed. Indeed, all mammal tissue has been banned from all agricultural feed in that country, and, furthermore, the World Health Organization is now endorsing a ban for all countries. However, in the United States this practice continues up to the present time as a routine process, designed to boost milk and meat production. Indeed, offal from sheep, cattle and other animals, as well as animal feces, is routinely fed to American food animals (cattle, pigs, poultry and fish) in the form of rendered pellets, powder or meal. In addition, massive quantities of blood meal, bone meal and other animal byproducts find their way into food animal's feed. It is grossly unnatural and dangerous to feed blood and other animal parts to cattle, which are natural vegetarians. Animal diseases may very well be passed on in the process.

Various diseases may also be transmitted to human beings who eat infected animals. Indeed, from feed, to cow, to the human brain, appears to be the progression of Mad Cow Disease, which has leaped across the species barrier to become a variant of CJD.

Cattle with the disease show symptoms of staggering, drooling, aggression, and confused behavior, appearing to have gone "mad." Afflicted humans show symptoms similar to Alzheimer's disease--dementia, confusion, convulsions, loss of speech, sight, and hearing, and ending with a coma and death. This disease, one of the most mysterious known to human beings, is always fatal and there is no treatment for it. The incubation period seems to be four to thirty years.

The causative agent appears to be a deformed molecule called a "prion," (pronounced PREE-on), a mysterious and abnormal infectious protein. This strange-acting, never-before-seen infectious agent, which is neither a bacteria nor a virus, is distinct from anything encountered before--an infectious agent that defies the accepted rules of nature. Smaller than the tiniest

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virus, they do not contain nucleic acid which makes up the RNA and DNA that carry the genetic codes of normal viruses, bacteria, plants, cows, humans and virtually all other living things. Yet they are able to replicate and spread, but do not activate an immune response. Unfortunately, they are highly resistant to heat, UV light, radiation and most common chemical disinfectants.

Q. Surely the proper authorities in this country are taking actions to prevent this disease from gaining a foothold here. Is not this the case?

A. Tragically, this is not so. The very practice that apparently caused and fostered Mad Cow Disease in England--feeding cattle processed remains of other animals--is commonplace in America. The image of contented cows grazing on sweet grass and hay should forever be dispelled. No "Green Acres" here! Ground up carcasses of sheep, cows and other animals, including their tonsils, intestines, spinal cords, brains, spleens, and so on, are a regular part of the daily bill of fare of food animals, which are mass produced by intensive, risky, production-driven, farming methods. The poor animals are crowded and confined by the thousands on factory-style farms. These, and other horrors of modern animal food production, give rise to various chronic, insidious, and complex groups of diseases.

Recently, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) considered a ban on feeding cows to cows. However, according to an internal USDA document, the agency dismissed the ban because "the cost to the livestock and rendering industries would be substantial."¹ Clearly, this governmental agency has placed the financial interests of the influential, multibillion-dollar livestock industry ahead of public health.

However, a ban on this procedure may not be the answer to the problem. Even in Great Britain, where a mandatory ban has been in effect since 1989, some farmers have illicitly been feeding their cattle rendered animal parts. This disturbing reality has always been the case. Any ban is totally dependent on individual and industrial compliance.

Q. Many are simply shifting from beef to other meats such as pork, poultry, lamb, and so forth. Is not this the safe, sane thing to do?

A. No. Like cows, all of these animals are regularly fed rendered animal byproducts, as well as vast quantities of antibiotics, hormones, anabolic steroids (the same as used by athletes and body builders), and various other legal and illegal medications. Some medical scientists are warning that a full-blown epidemic of Mad Cow Disease, E.coli infections, or some other type of meat-borne disease, is "waiting in the wings" in this country. It is just a matter of time!

Indeed, the ill effects of a meat-centered diet are already epidemic. Even if these animals are healthy, eating them is not. Study after study clearly demonstrates that beef, pork, poultry and lamb, even when untainted by disease, contain massive amounts of saturated fats and cholesterol, thus helping to clog arteries, hospitals and cemeteries worldwide. Mounting evidence likewise links meat consumption with stroke, cancer, diabetes, gout, osteoporosis and a host of other infectious and inflammatory diseases.

Speaking of poultry, Alex Hershaft, Ph.D., writing in *Vegetarian Voice*, Vol. 21, No. 4. (1996), warns: "Chickens are fed more infected animal protein than cows--and are likely carriers of the disease (BSE)--they just don't live long enough to exhibit symptoms. We must convince

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consumers that chicken is not a 'health food,' but a reliable source of saturated fat, cholesterol, salmonella--and perhaps 'Mad Chicken Disease.' "

A further warning comes from Neal Barnard, M.D., writing in *Good Medicine*, (Spring 1996): "Research has shown beyond any reasonable doubt that meat is to your digestive tract and arteries what tobacco is to your lungs. Meat contributes to colon cancer, heart attacks and other risks that run neck in neck with the toll brought on by tobacco."

Q. The symptoms of CJD closely resemble those of Alzheimer's Disease. Could there be a connection?

A. CJD usually strikes the middle-aged and elderly (like Alzheimer's); however, recent victims in England averaged 26 years of age, including some in their teens. The brain tissue of these young people looked like Alzheimer's. Is there a connection between the two maladies? Four million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's. Could this horrible affliction be caused by a variant of the CJD agent? Some medical authorities raise the distinct possibility that CJD can be easily misdiagnosed as Alzheimer's. Clearly, there are more questions than answers.

Q. Surely some type of "early warning system" should have been in place. Right?

A. Absolutely! Almost 100 years ago, our own Ellen G. White wrote: "Disease in cattle is making meat eating a dangerous matter. The Lord's curse is upon the earth, upon man, upon beasts, upon the fish in the sea; and as transgression becomes almost universal, the curse will be permitted to become as broad and as deep as the transgression. Disease is contracted by the use of meat. The diseased flesh of these dead carcasses is sold in the market places, and disease among men is the sure result. . . .

"There is no safety in the eating of the flesh of dead animals, and in a short time the milk of cows will also be excluded from the diet of God's commandment-keeping people. In a short time it will not be safe to use anything that comes from the animal creation. . . .

"The disease upon animals is becoming more and more common, and our only safety now is leaving meat entirely alone. . . . Because of meat eating, many die, and they do not understand the cause. . . . In eating meat we partake of diseased dead flesh, and this sows its seeds of corruption in the human organism." *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 411-414.

"People are continually eating flesh that is filled with tuberculosis and cancerous germs. Tuberculosis, cancer, and other fatal diseases are thus communicated." *Ibid.*, 388.

"We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God's people. I have been instructed that flesh food has a tendency to animalize the nature, to rob men and women of that love and sympathy which they should feel for everyone, and to give the lower passions control over the higher powers of the being. If meat eating was ever healthful, it is not safe now. Cancers, tumors, and pulmonary diseases are largely caused by meat eating.

"We are not to make the use of flesh food a test of fellowship, but we should consider the influence that professed believers who use flesh foods have over others. As God's messengers,

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shall we not say to the people: 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?' 1 Corinthians 10:31." *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 159.

Sister White gives a wealth of counsel on this and many, many other subjects. Overall, our "early warning system" has become a daily guide and is as new as tomorrow's newspaper, offering a look into the future. Thank you, Jesus!

Facts You Should Know About Mad Cow Disease (BSE):

- concluded that as little as one teaspoon of BSE-infected feed can transfer the infection to cattle. The infectious agent may be able to survive for ten years or more.²
- beef and sheep slaughter byproducts--the most likely source of BSE, according to the National Renderers Association, in Alexandria, Virginia.
- is present in the United States sheep population. According to the USDA, 7,500 American sheep have the disease.³
- reported in France, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Oman and the Falkland Islands.
- in the United States could surpass those currently being experienced in Great Britain. The BSE time bomb is constantly ticking!
- zoo animals--elk, mice, cheetahs, pigs and domestic cats.
- Even after being baked in the lab at over 500 degrees Fahrenheit, diseased animal brain tissue remains infectious!
- that there is any risk to public health, some BSE experts disagree: "Potentially, this is one of the most frightening diseases the world has ever known," says Edward L. Menning, D.V.M., editor of the *Journal of Federal Veterinarians*.⁴

This latest wake-up call will no doubt cause many Adventists to rethink their concept of "clean meat." In the light of new information surfacing regularly concerning the many, many dangers of eating any and all meat products, this term (clean meat) has become an oxymoron [contradictory expression]. British microbiologist, Richard Lacy, Ph.D., reminds us of this aspect of our own message when he states emphatically, "The simple and safest answer is to stop eating animals."⁵ With this we wholeheartedly agree--to continue to partake of this very questionable article of food is indeed madness!

Earth Save, Summer 1996, Vol. 7, No. 2, 6.

Vegetarian Voice, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1996, 5.

Ibid.

Vegetarian Times, June 1996, 16.

Earth Save, Summer 1996, Vol. 7, No. 2, 5.