

	<b>The BSE Inquiry: The Report</b>	
	The Inquiry into BSE and variant CJD in the United Kingdom	
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## Volume 1 Findings and Conclusions

### Executive Summary of the Report of the Inquiry

#### 1. Key conclusions

- BSE has caused a harrowing fatal disease for humans. As we sign this Report the number of people dead and thought to be dying stands at over 80, most of them young. They and their families have suffered terribly. Families all over the UK have been left wondering whether the same fate awaits them.
- A vital industry has been dealt a body blow, inflicting misery on tens of thousands for whom livestock farming is their way of life. They have seen over 170,000 of their animals dying or having to be destroyed, and the precautionary slaughter and destruction within the United Kingdom of very many more.
- BSE developed into an epidemic as a consequence of an intensive farming practice - the recycling of animal protein in ruminant feed. This practice, unchallenged over decades, proved a recipe for disaster.
- In the years up to March 1996 most of those responsible for responding to the challenge posed by BSE emerge with credit. However, there were a number of shortcomings in the way things were done.
- At the heart of the BSE story lie questions of how to handle hazard - a known hazard to cattle and an unknown hazard to humans. The Government took measures to address both hazards. They were sensible measures, but they were not always timely nor adequately implemented and enforced.
- The rigour with which policy measures were implemented for the protection of human health was affected by the belief of many prior to early 1996 that BSE was not a potential threat to human life.
- The Government was anxious to act in the best interests of human and animal health. To this end it sought and followed the advice of independent scientific experts - sometimes when decisions could have been reached more swiftly and satisfactorily within government.
- In dealing with BSE, it was not MAFF's policy to lean in favour of the agricultural producers to the detriment of the consumer.
- At times officials showed a lack of rigour in considering how policy should be turned into practice, to the detriment of the efficacy of the measures taken.
- At times bureaucratic processes resulted in unacceptable delay in giving effect to policy.
- The Government introduced measures to guard against the risk that BSE might be a matter of life and death not merely for cattle but also for humans, but the possibility of a risk to humans was not communicated to the public or to those whose job it was to implement and enforce the precautionary measures.
- The Government did not lie to the public about BSE. It believed that the risks posed by BSE to humans were remote. The Government was preoccupied with preventing an alarmist over-reaction to BSE because it believed that the risk was remote. It is now clear that this campaign of reassurance was a mistake. When on 20 March 1996 the Government announced that BSE had probably been

transmitted to humans; the public felt that they had been betrayed. Confidence in government pronouncements about risk was a further casualty of BSE.

- Cases of a new variant of CJD (vCJD) were identified by the CJD Surveillance Unit and the conclusion that they were probably linked to BSE was reached as early as was reasonably possible. The link between BSE and vCJD is now clearly established, though the manner of infection is not clear.

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