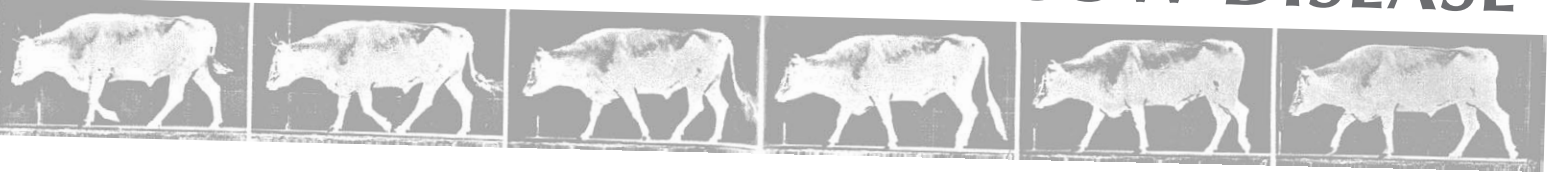




# ORGANIC BYTES

Organic News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association · [www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)  
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## SPECIAL EDITION: MAD COW DISEASE



### TAKE ACTION: Failure of the USDA and the FDA

Mad Cow Disease has officially hit the United States. In Japan and Europe, every adult cow is tested for Mad Cow Disease at slaughter—before it enters the food chain. US testing policies are quite a bit more relaxed. Last year, while the European Union (EU) tested 10 million cattle for Mad Cow, the US tested only 20,526 cows out of 35 million slaughtered. Since the Mad Cow Disease outbreak in the UK, which killed 143 people, the OCA and its allies have pressured the USDA to create standards that emulate those of Japan and the EU. Yet the USDA continues to resist. Speaking of the fact that Japan tests every single cow it butchers (1.2 million per year), Dr. DeHaven, the USDA's Chief Veterinarian, told the *New York Times* that the Japanese are doing too much testing. The families and loved ones of those who have died from CJD in the US would disagree.

Join millions of citizens and sign the Mad Cow USA-Stop the Madness online petition, demanding that the US Government adopt & enforce:

- Mandatory testing for all cattle brought to slaughter, before they enter the food chain.
- Ban the feeding of blood, manure, and slaughterhouse waste to animals.

You can sign the online petition at: [www.organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm) · Please forward this address to family and friends!

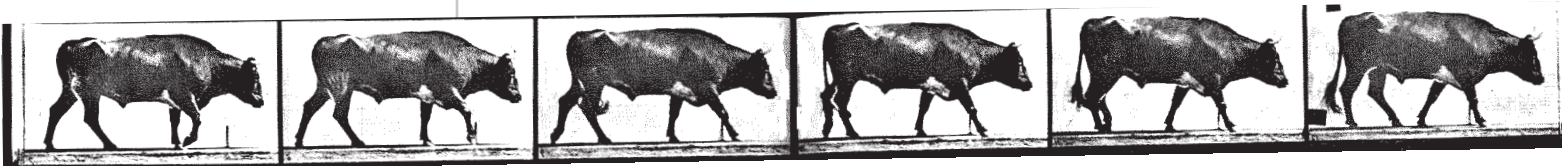
#### What Mad Cow Disease Does to a Human

When a human contracts this fatal neurological disease, either spontaneously or via eating infected meat, it is referred to as Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD). There are roughly 300 new human cases of CJD in the US every year. The percentage of those cases that are caused by undetected contamination in the food supply is unknown. Early symptoms of the disease include escalating neurological and muscular symptoms, including confusion, depression, behavioral changes and impaired vision and coordination. As the disease progresses, the symptoms worsen. The disease is incurable and always fatal.

#### Mad Cow Disease: You Are What You Eat

Since the discovery of Mad Cow Disease in the US last week, the USDA has made repeated statements that consumers need not worry, as the disease can only be spread to humans and other cows via ingestion of nervous system tissue from an infected cow, not muscle meat. Interestingly enough, the USDA did inspections of meat processing plants in 2002, and found that, due to current killing and mechanical meat extraction practices in US slaughterhouses, a full 35 percent of beef is contaminated with nervous system tissue. Studies have shown that many processed meats, such as ground beef, salami, bologna, and hotdogs contain bits of the spinal column. Of course, T-bone steaks actually contain cow vertebrae and part of the spinal chord, so according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, these meats need to be avoided as well, since cooking the meat does not kill the disease. Beef stock and beef flavoring also contain remnants of nervous system tissue, as they are typically made from boiling the skeletal remains of slaughtered animals. Boneless cuts can also be contaminated, in that the animal is cut in half with a chainsaw, down the spinal column, thereby contaminating the surrounding meat. A European study of animals slaughtered in this manner showed 100% contamination of meat. In addition recent studies show that infectious agents do show up in the muscle of the meat, and that Mad Cow and Mad Cow-like diseases can be transmitted in blood.

[www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/Greger122403.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/Greger122403.cfm)



## Quote of the Week

Describing the Bush administration's policy on testing cows for Mad Cow Disease: "It is 'a surveillance system, not a food safety test...'"

Describing the Japanese government's policy: "Japan tests too much, it's 'like a doctor testing every patient who comes through the door for prostate cancer.'"

-Dr. Ron DeHaven, Chief Veterinarian,  
US Department of Agriculture  
-*New York Times*, December 26, 2004

## Cow Cannibals

In 1997 the FDA banned certain practices of feeding rendered bovine meat to other cows, based on increased likelihood of spreading diseases. Yet, within the beef industry, it is still a common practice to feed animals blood, slaughterhouse wastes, and manure. On non-organic dairies it's a standard practice to wean calves from their mother's milk by feeding them bovine blood and later feeding slaughterhouse wastes, in order to maximize profits. The problem here is that the disease can also be found in the white blood cells. Adding to the problem, unhealthy animals, known as "Downer-Cows", are not deemed safe for human consumption, and are sent off to rendering plants to make oils and animal protein products. A 2001 study in Germany found that downer-cows were up to 240 times more likely to test positive for Mad Cow Disease. In the US, only 10-15% of downer-cows are tested for the disease. Learn more and take action: [organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm](http://organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm)

## Mad Cow Economics 101

Thanks to Mad Cow Disease, the US beef industry is facing an economic crisis. Within 24 hours of discovering Mad Cow Disease in the US, more than a dozen nations banned imports of American beef, including the US's biggest overseas customers Japan and Mexico. It is likely more nations will ban imports in the coming days. The US beef industry will likely lose the vast majority of the \$2.6 billion worth of beef products exported last year. [organicconsumers.org/madcow/export122503.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/madcow/export122503.cfm)

## The Power Of A Prion

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, otherwise known as Mad Cow Disease, is caused by proteins, called prions, that fold themselves into abnormal shapes. Misshaped prions then cause healthy prions to fold. Together, they amass into clumps that kill cells and literally leave holes in the brain. A cow could have early forms of the disease and still show healthy behavior. If the cow is not tested before slaughter, that infected meat enters the food supply, thereby allowing the unhealthy prions to take hold in others. Because of their unique structure, prions are practically invulnerable. Prions are not adequately destroyed by cooking, canning, freezing, usable doses of radiation, digestive enzymes, or stomach acid. One study even raised the disturbing question of whether even incineration at temperatures hot enough to melt lead could guarantee the inactivation of prions. Acknowledging their relative invulnerability and fact that prion diseases are always fatal, Dr. Michael Gregor, a world renowned expert on Mad Cow Disease, says, "We cannot risk these pathogens getting any further into the food supply than they may already have. We need to ban the feeding of all slaughterhouse waste to livestock as recommended by the World Health Organization back in 1996."

## How Many Mad Cows are Out There?

Mad Cow Disease can be contracted via ingestion of contaminated meat, but, according to current studies, it also spontaneously occurs, on its own, in roughly one out of a million cows. Given the fact that the US beef industry slaughtered nearly 400 million cows in the last ten years, statistically speaking, that should add up to an expected minimum of 400 spontaneous Mad Cow cases inside US borders. Since the USDA only tests roughly one out of every 2,000 animals, only one case has been discovered so far, while the others have slipped through—possibly into the human food supply. Of course, that's just counting the spontaneous occurrences of the disease. In addition to the spontaneous cases, there are an unknown number of cows infected with the disease by other cows. This has gone undetected, as well. The incubation period of the disease is three to eight years, so the detection of one animal with the disease suggests the strong likelihood that other cows were infected by the same source but haven't been found yet. A 1997 FDA memorandum predicted that if just one case of Mad Cow Disease was found in the US and a total ban on feeding animal protein to animals was implemented, it's still possible that as many as 300,000 infected cows would be found over the period of the disease's incubation period (three to eight years). In short, due to scant USDA testing, no one knows how many infected animals have already entered the human food supply. [organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm](http://organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm)



For many more food issue daily headlines: [www.organicconsumers.org/log.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/log.html)

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