

With the adoption of the decision on equivalence, the Committee turned its attention to regionalization, holding informal meetings on the issue at each of its meetings in 2004. A number of countries, including Canada, tabled documents on this issue, and various members provided information regarding their achievement of pest- or disease-free status. The Committee will continue its work in this area in 2005.

Canada continued to update the Committee on developments relating to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Canada at the March, June

and October meetings. It provided information on its regulatory response and called on trading partners to resume imports of beef products from Canada on scientific grounds. Canada also encouraged support for the adoption of improvements to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) chapter on BSE. On the margins of the Committee meetings, Canada met with key trading partners (including China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea) to press for science-based removal of their BSE-related restrictions on imports from Canada.

### **BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY**

Following Canada's announcement of its first BSE case in Alberta on May 20, 2003, most of our trading partners banned the import of Canadian cattle, beef and other bovine products.

Several trading partners subsequently resumed partial trade in beef with Canada:

- North America: the United States and Mexico;
- Central America and the Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Honduras, and Trinidad and Tobago;
- Middle East: Saudi Arabia and Lebanon;
- Asia: Hong Kong and Macau.

Canada has been asking trading partners to resume trade for a maximum range of beef products and live animals based on World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standards. These standards clearly state that BSE should not significantly impair trade when proper safeguards are in place, such as when specified risk material (SRM) has been removed from the product. Removal of SRM is internationally recognized as the most effective public health measure against BSE, and in July 2003 Canada imposed a ban on SRM in products destined for human consumption.

On January 2, 2005, Canada confirmed its second BSE case in Alberta, and on January 11, its third. The cases were identified through the national surveillance program. No part of either animal entered the human or animal feed systems. On January 21, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced the conclusion of its investigation of the January 2 case. On February 2, the CFIA announced the conclusion of its investigation of the January 11 case.

In negotiations with our trading partners, Canada has been very open about the prospect of finding more BSE. The identification of additional cases of BSE in Canada was not unexpected, as we have long believed that a low, declining level of BSE is present in North America. Canada's position remains that trading partners should accept beef from Canada based on the range of mitigation measures in place, in particular our SRM ban referred to above.

Canada has kept its trading partners fully informed of all developments regarding the investigations of its three BSE cases and of its regulatory responses. This has been accomplished through direct contacts between ministers and senior officials in Ottawa and their foreign government counterparts and through all of our missions abroad. At the same time, Canadian ministers, senior officials and missions continue to make representations to our trading partners requesting a science-based resumption of trade.

Please refer to individual country sections for more detailed information about specific markets.