

**Opinion of the Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards of the European Food Safety Authority on the safety vis-à-vis biological risk including TSEs of the application on pastureland of organic fertilisers and soil improvers.**

(Question N° EFSA-Q-2003-090)

**Adopted on 3 March 2004**

**SUMMARY OF OPINION**

The European Commission requested the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and its Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards (1) to reconsider, from a TSE (Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy) risk perspective, the opinion of the Scientific Committee on Toxicology, Ecotoxicity and the Environment (SCTEE 24 April 2001) in the light of the opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC 10-11 May 2001) and (2) to advise on the levels of biological risk clearance to allow the definition of the appropriate minimum waiting period after which grazing may be allowed following application of organic fertiliser or soil improvers from categories 2 and 3 Animal By-Products (ABP) on pastureland.

It was stressed that all conclusions depend on effective controls being in place to assure status of all 3 categories of ABP. If ABP of category 2 and 3 are to be used as a source for organic fertilisers and should there be any possibility of contamination with category 1 ABP then the whole batch should be processed according to category 1 ABP.

There are no scientific data available defining the fate of prions following application to land, pasture or directly into the soil. It remains accepted that TSE agents are cleared very slowly from the environment, however a definite period after which TSE agents can be considered to have been completely cleared, based on scientific evidence, cannot be established.

The Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards concludes that if appropriate control measures and appropriate heat treatment (as laid down by legislation) applying to category 2 and 3 ABP are in place, no waiting period in addition to the one already defined in the legislation and based on Good Agricultural Practice is necessary. In that case, the ABP of category 2 and 3 are safe to be used for spreading on pastureland.

ABP of category 3 can be processed in alternative ways, provided that product and process are microbiological safe to eliminate human, animal and environmental risk. This must be confirmed by microbiological validation.

The Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards and its Working Group concludes that in respect to TSE/BSE, the SSC opinion (10-11 May 2001) on “Safety of Organic Fertilisers derived from ruminant animals” remains entirely valid.

**Key words: BSE, animal by-products, organic fertilisers, meat and bone meal, pastureland, environment.**