

# How Thatcherism led to BSE

The following is a timeline of events from the 1970s to the 1990s, recording the warnings that were given by public health and political leaders, and the action—and inaction—of Margaret Thatcher and her circle. The four phases of the 25-year period are: 1) the 1970s, when Thatcherism ignored public health warnings, and intensified risks; 2) 1979-90, when the Thatcher government worsened the risks, stalled on BSE countermeasures when the disease broke out, and then spread it; 3) 1991-95, when Thatcherism continued after Margaret Thatcher left the government; and 4) 1996, when the scandal broke into the open.

—Prepared by *EIR* staff in Leesburg, Wiesbaden, and Paris.

## Disease outbreaks, warnings, and actions

## The policy record of Thatcherism

### The 1970s—the Thatcher cabinet years

**1970s:** High-profile controversy rages in international scientific circles about what the causative disease agent is for sheep scrapie (known about for 250 years) and spongiform encephalopathies in other species, and how infectious the agent is.

High incidence of scrapie in British flocks. There is a ratio of sheep numbers to cattle numbers, of over 2:1.

U.K. rendering facilities start to drop use of organic solvent extraction of greaves (traditionally used in treatments of fats, such as benzene, hexane, petroleum, perchloroethylene), and also begin to use new continuous flow processing equipment, instead of the traditional batch methods. Lower temperatures and pressures are introduced, too low to deactivate certain bacteria and other contaminants.

U.K. cartel feed companies start promotional campaign for new “alternative” feeds, high in recycled animal proteins, to replace plain grain and grass-based feeds.

Researchers investigate spongiform encephalopathy that shows up in ranch minks in Wisconsin (U.S. ranch mink center; and top dairy state), which is traced to eating contaminated feeds from cow or sheep parts.



*From the French newspaper  
Nouvelle Solidarité.*

**1970-74:** Margaret Thatcher serves as secretary of state of education and science under Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath.

Her degrees from Oxford (B.A., 1946; B.Sc., 1949), Somerville College, included chemistry and other sciences; she worked as a research chemist in the early 1950s, before taking a law degree and entering politics in 1959. In college, “In my fourth and final year (1946-47) I worked with a refugee German scientist, Gerhard Schmidt, under [1964 Nobel Prize crystallographer] Dorothy Hodgkin’s direction, on the simple protein Gramicidin B as the research project required to complete Part II of my chemistry course.”

**1971:** Prosper de Mulder Ltd., private Anglo-Dutch company in the “approved” political circles of the neo-British Empire, imports the first equipment for the new (U.S.) Carver-Greenfield process (lower temperatures and pressures) for rendering animal by-products. De Mulder is moving to dominate all rendering in Britain; over 1968 to 1975, de Mulder buys up 79 U.K. rendering facilities, either closing, or absorbing them; in the course of this, de Mulder switches over to lower temperatures and pressure.

**March 11-Sept. 7, 1974:** Mrs. Thatcher is environment secretary in shadow cabinet of Edward Heath.

**Feb. 11, 1975:** Mrs. Thatcher becomes leader of the Conservative Party. She says, “It was only in the mid-1970s, when [Friedrich von] Hayek’s works were right at the top of the reading list given me by Keith Joseph, that I really came to grips with the ideas he put forward. . . . [In his book *The Road to Serfdom*] Hayek saw that Nazism—national socialism—had its roots in nineteenth-century German social planning. He showed that intervention by the state on one area of the economy or society gave rise to almost irresistible pressures to extend planning further into other sectors.”

She promotes dogma of government deregulation, free trade, privatization. Meanwhile, behind the screen of rhetoric of “individual and market competition,” a select group of individuals and companies is moving to make huge gains off privatization and monopoly positions.

In and out of the 1970s cabinets and shadow cabinets with Thatcher, is Thatcher’s future agriculture minister, Peter Walker.

**1978:** U.K. government-connected consultants draft proposals for tight licensing conditions for processing animal protein.

D. Carleton Gajdusek, U.S. researcher of human central nervous system disorders, receives Nobel Prize and delivers oration, "Transmissible Dementias of Man and Animals," promoting the "slow virus" view.

**March 1979:** Nuffield Medical Center, Oxford, veterinary expert H.B. (James) Parry, stresses the genetic factor in sheep scrapie agent, presenting the results of a study on this, warning, "In view of the wide interest aroused in the general subject, it is important to place on record facts regarding scrapie in sheep which are generally overlooked in the scramble to establish a primary infectious aetiology for this group of disorders. The implications of these results are also important for the policies of Government Veterinary and Agricultural Departments around the world, who view scrapie, quite properly, as a potentially very serious matter." (From letter to British magazine *Nature*, which rejected Parry's work.)

**1979:** U.S. Department of Agriculture begins systematic experiments in Ames, Iowa to see under what conditions cows might be made to get transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) from infected sheep material.

In 1970-72, Walker is Edward Heath's secretary of state for the environment; he is secretary of state for trade and industry, 1972-74. Thatcher says that Walker has a "thirst for the 'modernization' of British industry."

*Thatcher's mentor on privatization, Keith Joseph, who served as her industry secretary and education secretary.*



**1979:** Prosper de Mulder Ltd. now dominates all processing of animal slaughter waste products in Britain, and supplies growing quantities of meat and bonemeal to cartel livestock feed companies. The company's annual turnover doubles from £35 million in 1979, to £71 million in 1985.

## The Thatcher government years, 1979-90

**September 1979:** Release of the report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, which recommends that hygiene standards in British livestock feed be tightened. The commission wants tight license conditions for processing animal proteins that are cycled back into the animal feed chain. The report states, "The major problem encountered in this recycling process [involving animal waste] is the risk of transmitting disease-bearing pathogens to stock and thence to humans." A prominent member of the Royal Commission is Sir Richard Southwood, who continues to speak out against recycling improperly treated animal protein by-product, particularly scrapie sheep material, into the feed chain.

**1980s:** The U.K. processing modes for rendering animal by-products are drastically changed to lower pressures and temperatures; continental rendering requirements remain far higher. In the U.K., animal product is rendered at temperatures as low as 80°C—low enough to kill *salmonellae* and some other microbes, but not near to conditions necessary to deactivate sheep scrapie scraps, and any similar infective wastes. At the same time, chemical solvents to clean the processing machines of the fat are phased out of use.

In Germany, the traditional batch mode of rendering is maintained, treating animal by-products at a high pressure for a temperature minimum 137°C.

In Denmark, farm veterinarians warn of biological holocaust from U.K. rendering and feed mix practices.

Expert opinion recommends conditions for treating animal feed be cooking for more than four hours at a minimum of 120°C.

**May 3, 1979:** Conservatives win general elections.

**May 4, 1979:** Mrs. Thatcher becomes prime minister. Her agriculture secretary is Peter Walker; minister for environment is Michael Heseltine.

**September 1979:** Thatcher government opposes conclusions of the report from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. Thatcher government decides to loosen regulations on allowing animal wastes to be processed into animal feed, and does not implement the 1978 draft proposals for tightening licensing of processing animal wastes.

**1980:** Internal consultative papers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, show that cabinet members continue to favor ignoring the 1978 draft proposals for tight licensing requirements for processing animal wastes. They favor dropping the recommendations, and do not impose them. Instead, government officials mandate a "self-regulatory regime" in the industry.

**1980s:** U.K. rendering of animal waste for livestock feed and other uses, is dominated by Prosper de Mulder Ltd., with its monopoly on processing abattoir animal by-product.

**1980s:** The U.K. animal feed mix industry—which recycles the processed animal waste product—is dominated at this point by a cartel of companies, interconnected with old-line London and Anglo-Dutch finance. The principal firm is BOCM Silcock, part of the Anglo-Dutch Unilever complex; other prominent firms are British Petroleum Nutrition (whose Hendrix International division is the biggest feed producer in Europe), Dalgety PLC, and Pauls PLC.



*Sheep fed with improperly treated animal protein are at risk of infection with scrapie.*

**1982:** U.S. scientist S.B. Prusiner puts in use the term “prion,” to refer to the pathogenic agent of spongiform encephalopathies, being “proteinacious, infectious (animal tissue) proteins,” and not bacteria, nor viruses, nor such known microbes.



**1985:** U.K. veterinarians and farmers observe many signs of new cattle disease.

**November 1986:** First official diagnosis of BSE in Britain.

**1988:** Britain’s newly formed Working Party on Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, constituted by the Department of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (MAFF), is called the Southwood Committee, because it includes as a member, Prof. Sir (Thomas) Richard (Edmund) Southwood, professor of zoology, Oxford. He makes repeated warnings about the dangers of recycling animal proteins back into the feed chain.

**July 1988:** Australia bans imports of British cattle.

Tainted animal feeds from U.K. are exported worldwide.

U.K. feed cartel “experts” defend lowered temperatures and pressures in rendering animal wastes for livestock feed on grounds including: 1) saves fuel; 2) preserves nutrient-content and appetizing character; 3) provides cheap protein substitute for higher-cost corn, soybeans, and other livestock feed ingredients. Prominent cartel-backed centers for promoting “alternative” feeds and substances, include University of Nottingham (Professor Cole); and University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana; Prof. Dave Baker).

**1981:** Government promulgates the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) order of 1981, which sets out minimal rules for allowing waste animal parts to be fed to cattle. Three cabinet ministers who sign this document are: Peter Walker, minister of agriculture, fisheries, and food; George Younger, the Scottish secretary; and Nicholas Edwards, the Welsh secretary. This ratifies the continuation of infective animal by-product going into the feed chain.

**June 1983:** Peter Walker leaves as agriculture minister; becomes energy minister (1983-87), where he continues deregulation and privatization in gas and electricity.

**1985:** The Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) rules that Prosper de Mulder Ltd., the monopoly rendering company, engages in “discriminatory” pricing. This is the second investigation of the company. (The MMC comes to make another ruling of “discriminatory pricing” in 1993.) At no time does the Thatcher government take action to curb Mulder in its pricing or processing practices.

Feed mix company Pauls PLC is taken over by Harrison & Crossfield PLC, the old tea conglomerate with longtime diverse agriculture commodities operations in former colonial territories, now leaving Asian palm oil and other plantations, and seeking retrenched positions in U.K. and related “mature” locations.

**1986:** Central Veterinary Office (CVO) identifies BSE as an epidemic disease among cows.

**October 1987:** Peter Walker leaves as energy minister; becomes minister for Wales.

**1988:** Formation of Working Party on Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy by the Department of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, which works through 1989.

**June 1988:** Government makes BSE a notifiable disease. Over 2,000 BSE cows are reported for 1988.

**July 1988:** Government orders that all cows known to be infected with BSE are to be destroyed; milk from infected cows is to be destroyed. Herds in which the infected cows are identified, are not required to be destroyed. Government does not enforce these rulings.

**July 1988:** Government orders the ban of use of cows and sheep by-product to feed other cows and sheep. Government does not enforce this ban.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food overrules Department of Health, over public health threat from extensive salmo-

**May 17, 1989:** Memorandum to the British government from then-Labour Party shadow Agriculture Minister Ron Davies, states, "Infected meat is now being exported, in its raw state, to other countries. The government's failure to take any action to prevent the disease spreading, is so grossly irresponsible, as to be scarcely credible." He warns of an "enormous reservoir" of potential infection included in the annual export of 3,000 tons of scrapie-infected sheep meal.

Davies writes: "Such complacency . . . is so blinkered and selfish as to constitute a scandal—a scandal to which I hope our trading partners will wake up, before BSE hits them, to the extent that it has hit us. If they avoid that fate, it will not be due to any consideration of their interests by the British government."

Recommendations by Davies include: testing of cattle at slaughterhouses, better enforcement of tougher abattoir rules, the establishment of an independent Food Standards Agency, and assurances that "consumers know where their beef is coming from."

**May 1989:** New Zealand bans all imports of bovine genetic material from Britain.

**July 1989:** European Community bans imports from U.K. of live cattle born before July 1988.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) stops issuing permits to import meat scraps and bonemeal from the U.K. Imports of live animals are also banned.

**September 1989:** USDA halts imports of bovine calf serum, which is used in medical products.

Germany bans use of any animal remains in the feed of cattle.

**December 1989:** The U.S. Animal Protein Producer Industry, an association of U.S. rendering industries, recommends that its members stop processing sheep for use in feed mixes for ruminants. Dramatic increase is seen in United States (1985-90) in use of rendered cattle by-product protein back into animal rations.

**January 1990:** First case of BSE outside U.K., reported in the Sultanate of Oman.

**Feb. 24, 1990:** Saudi Arabia bans British cattle imports.

**March 1990:** European Community bans imports to the continent from U.K. of live cattle over six months old (replaces July 1989 ban).

EC makes BSE a notifiable disease throughout EC.

**April 1990:** Russia bans British beef, milk, butter, cheese, and sheep and goat meat.

**May 1990:** Call in the United States for setting up a BSE surveillance program immediately, from Richard F. Marsh, veterinary scientist at the University of Wisconsin, at Madison. "The exact same thing could happen over here as happened in Britain."

**May 11, 1990:** Feline equivalent of BSE identified in a cat in Bristol, England, the first time a domestic pet has been involved.

**May 29, 1990:** Austria bans import of British beef.

**May 30, 1990:** France bans import of British beef.

**June 1, 1990:** West Germany bans imports of British beef.

**June 6, 1990:** Italy bans import of British beef.

**June 7, 1990:** Qatar bans import of British beef.

**June 7, 1990:** EC Commission vows to tighten measures to curb BSE; France, West Germany, and Italy lift their bans

nella in U.K. eggs supplies. After Health Minister Edwina Currie acknowledges scientists' claims "that most of the egg production in this country is now infected with salmonella," she then is forced to take a back seat to MAFF spokesmen, who say that no threat exists.

**1989:** Over 6,000 BSE cows are reported in U.K. this year.

**May 1989:** Government rejects recommendations of memorandum from Ron Davies, shadow agriculture minister for the Labor Party. The government tells Davies that matters are "under control," and that the dangers were being exaggerated.

**June 1989:** Government bans human consumption of certain animal offal, including brain, spinal cord, thymus, spleen, and tonsils.

**Winter 1989:** Release of results of study conducted by the government's Working Party on BSE. It concludes that BSE spread undetected in the early 1980s through feed supplements containing rendered animal protein. The report suggests that one likely cause for the emergence of BSE was increased use of sheep offal in animal feeds, including sheep infected with scrapie. Dr. Richard Southwood warns of the dangers of "unnatural feeding practices."

*Thatcher's  
Agriculture  
Secretary Peter  
Walker.*



**1990:** Over 13,000 BSE cows are reported in U.K. this year.

**May 1990:** Peter Walker leaves the cabinet.

**June 1990:** Government demands that EC rescind bans on British beef, which are being imposed unilaterally by EC continental member nations, along with dozens of other nations banning British beef, because they do not trust the Thatcher government's belated and inadequate 1988-89 anti-BSE actions.

**June 26, 1990:** More than 1,000 schools in U.K. drop home-grown meat from their menus.

**July 1990:** Walker joins the board of Dalgety Co., after four years as agriculture secretary and four years as energy secretary. Becomes non-executive director of British Gas PLC, and Tate & Lyle, cartel sweetener company; and on board of Cornhill Insurance, and others.

against British beef imports.

**June 14, 1990:** Switzerland bans import of British beef.

**Nov. 3, 1990:** Switzerland reports first case of BSE.

**Nov. 28, 1990:** Thatcher resigns as prime minister.

## Thatcherism continues, post-Thatcher, 1991-96

**Feb. 28, 1991:** France reports first case of BSE.



USDA meat grader inspects beef carcasses.

**Aug. 11, 1992:** Denmark's first case of BSE is confirmed.

Release of book, *Prion Diseases of Humans and Animals*, summarizing what is known, and not known, about the agent and transmissibility of spongiform encephalopathy-type diseases, giving grounds for extra precaution to be taken on what goes into the food and feed chains (New York: Ellis Horwood, 1992; edited by S.B. Prusiner, J. Collinge, J. Powell, B. Anderton).

**March 12, 1993:** Medical journal *The Lancet* says that death from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) of a farmer whose herd had BSE, was the first fatality involving occupational contact with "Mad Cow" disease. Links are speculative.

**October-November 1993:** European Union imposes policy of "isolation and extermination" in dealing with swine fever outbreak in Northern Europe. Over two months, 520,000 pigs are killed in Germany's Lower Saxony alone; hog farmers are proscribed from resuming pig production for six months; farmers receive only the current meat price (DM 12.2 per kilogram) for their animals slaughtered; no EU compensation.

Ireland and other countries where BSE shows up, practice exterminating whole herds, not just single, stricken animals.

**May 1994:** Germany considers banning British beef and cattle. Three cows in Schleswig-Holstein appear to have BSE; all three were imports from Britain, coming through the same German breeder, who now comes under investigation for whether he used feed mixed with animal remains, outlawed in Germany

**1991:** Twenty-five thousand BSE cows are reported in U.K. this year.

**1991-92:** Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch food/feed conglomerate, sells feed company BOCM Silcock (the 1980s name) to Pauls PLC, which since 1985 is owned by Harrison & Crossfield PLC. Other shifts take place: BP Nutrition is sold off in various ways; Dalgety PLC (with Thatcher's former agriculture secretary, Peter Walker, on the board) becomes the largest livestock feed mix company in the U.K., and a world food/feed colossus.

**1992:** 37,000 BSE cows are reported in U.K. this year.

**January 1992:** Government threatens Russia for rejecting EU food aid offer of free U.K. beef—which rejection threatens the U.K. deal of getting paid by the EU for the giveaway beef. (Russian government decided in 1990 that British beef products may be BSE-contaminated.) British Minister of Overseas Development Lynda Chalker says, "If they are going to react like this, we have lots of other things to do, not only with our beef, but with our time." One Foreign Office official hints that Russia's objections may "have been prompted by rival EU beef producers" seeking "future orders and EU money."

The British government muscled the EU Agriculture Commission, which issues ruling, "It goes without saying that there will be further consignments of British beef" for food aid to Russia.

British Foreign Office hints that if Russia insists on saying no to food that it thinks is contaminated, then, the entire EU "food aid policy to Russia might have to be reconsidered."

Peter Walker is made a life peer, as Walker of Worcester. He is former agriculture and energy minister under Thatcher, who deregulated British livestock feeds, and privatized British gas and electricity systems; he now serves on boards of largest companies in same areas—Dalgety (largest U.K. feeds), British Gas PLC, etc.

**1993:** Thirty-four thousand BSE cow cases reported in U.K. this year.

**October 1993:** British government opposes EU compensation to continental hog farmers in North Europe hit by swine fever outbreak.

**1994:** Twenty-four thousand BSE cow cases reported in U.K. this year.

**May 1994:** Britain threatens to sue Germany in the European court at The Hague, if Germany goes ahead with the import bans that Bonn is now considering on British beef and cattle.

The European Commission, under heavy pressure from London, warns Bonn that it will face legal proceedings for restraint of

since 1989, but marketed by Britain.

**May 11, 1994:** Bonn backs down, under pressure from London, on Germany's threat to ban imports of British beef immediately. The German cabinet agrees to impose a ban if the EU fails to reach agreement on tougher measures to fight British BSE.

**May 26, 1994:** All three German "Mad Cow" cases are confirmed to have BSE; they came from the U.K.

The Helmut Kohl government wants an EU ban on British meat exports of cows over three years old and from U.K. farms which have not been BSE-free for the past four years. German Agriculture Minister Jochen Borchert says he will insist, at the May 30 EU agriculture ministers meeting, on a Europe-wide ban on British beef and cattle exports, to stop the spread of the disease. He says that he is checking whether a ban could be imposed on slaughtering British cattle imported into Germany before July 1990. "The aim of all measures must be to ensure consumers can continue eating beef without facing health risks."

German Health Minister Horst Seehofer rejects the suggestion of a restricted slaughter ban: "Isolated measures won't work. We need a common EU ruling." Bonn officials say that scientists have been unable to prove the BSE disorder cannot be transmitted to humans.

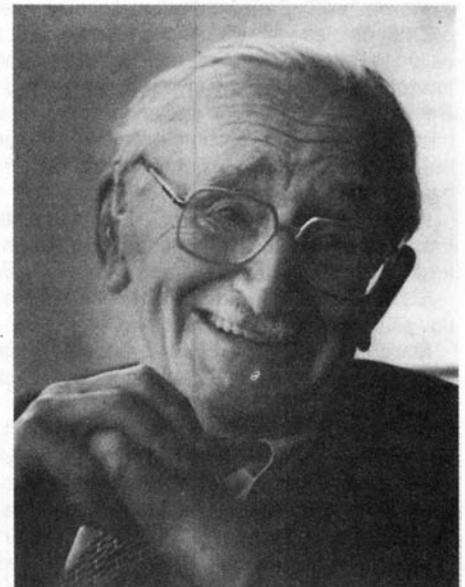
**July 18, 1994:** EU bans exports of meats containing bones, from cattle herds which had not been free of BSE for six years (instead of two years, a previous precaution).

**Dec. 7, 1994:** EU agrees to ease export curbs on beef from British cattle born since Jan. 1, 1992.



"Deregulation is driving me crazy"—from the German weekly Neue Solidarität.

trade if Germany bans British beef.



Thatcher's ideological guru, Friedrich von Hayek.

**1995:** Fourteen thousand BSE cow cases reported in U.K. this year.

**February 1995:** World Trade Organization (WTO), based in Geneva, and functioning as an arm of the private finance commodities cartel interests interconnected with Thatcher circles, issues annual report (for 1994-95) featuring progress on the new International Bovine Meat Agreement (in effect as of Jan. 1, 1995), which, as of Jan. 31, is signed by all 15 EC member nations, by the United States, Canada, Japan, Brazil, Switzerland, and others, and makes no mention of BSE. WTO stresses the Thatcherite line that the agreement "aims at promoting the expansion, ever greater liberalization and stability of the international meat and livestock market by facilitating the progressive dismantling of obstacles and restructions to world trade in bovine meat and live animals, and by improving the international framework of world trade to the benefit of consumers, producers, importers and exporters."

**Dec. 7, 1995:** Prime Minister John Major tells Parliament that media are exaggerating threats to humans from tainted meat, saying, "There is no scientific evidence that BSE can be transmitted to humans."

**Dec. 14, 1995:** Government imposes new controls forbidding any use of the animal's spinal column in "mechanically recovered" meat for meat products for human consumption—sausages, ground meat for meat loaves, pies, casseroles, pastries.

### Scandal breaks of Thatcherism-BSE links, March 1996

Reported cases of BSE outside of U.K., to date:

Switzerland	206	Italy	2
Ireland	123	Oman	2
Portugal	31	Canada	1
France	13	Denmark	1
Germany	4	Falklands	1

**1996:** Officially, 161,663 cases of BSE are reported in the U.K. since 1986. BSE cases continue to be reported in the U.K. at the rate of over 70 per week.

**Feb. 6, 1996:** Five German regional states ban imports of British beef.

**March 18-20:** Paris international conference on spongiform encephalopathies sees abrupt departure of U.K. delegation—recalled to Britain. They were scheduled to report on 10 anomalous cases of CJD, being investigated for links to BSE. Olivier Robain, expert on human and animal prion diseases at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, comments, “We are asking ourselves if this was censorship.” He notes that the U.K. delegation could have spoken before they left.

**March 21:** Bans on imports of British beef announced by France, Belgium, the Netherlands (until March 25), Sweden, Portugal, and other nations; Germany calls for a Europe-wide ban.

EU Commission in Brussels denounces France’s unilateral action as illegal under EU codes.

**March 22:** Germany, Finland, Greece, Austria, Italy, Cyprus, Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, and others, suspend imports of British beef.

EU Commission backs down from March 21 position that national bans are illegal under EU codes, and instead, decides that where food supplies may be perceived to be threatened, the national governments may institute such bans as “precautionary measures” to protect the public interest, under EU codes.

**March 25:** EU veterinarians meet, concur with continuing ban on importing British beef. Marc Savey, French representative to the EU veterinary group and chief of the Health Department at France’s National Center of Veterinary Studies, says, “We are in a situation which can properly be characterized as horrific, on the verge of scandal. It is intolerable that five days after the announcement of the British government, the scientific community still does not have access to all the medical information on this dossier” of 10 non-typical CJD cases under study (*Le Monde*, March 26). Savey says, “It is scandalous that [U.K. veterinarian Dr. Robert] Will gave only an oral report. . . . Today we still have no objective information. I had come [to Brussels] to discuss written documents. This is a total break with the scientific communication practices on such a very grave problem.”

EU Commission has emergency meeting, imposes ban on all British exports of beef and cattle products to EU and non-EU countries, to be effective March 27; hours later, EU Commission suspends its decision, pending convoking of another EU veterinary meeting, March 26, demanded by U.K.

**March 26:** EU second veterinary meeting takes place, at demand of U.K. EU bans continue.

National Farmers Union of U.K. calls for selective culling of beef herds, targetting millions of older cattle born before 1992; calls for U.K. government compensation; expects 2-4 million animals to be killed.

**April 1-3:** EU agriculture ministers in marathon meetings in Luxembourg; concur on continuing EU ban on exports of British beef and cattle products; reject U.K. Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg’s demand to lift ban. EU offers to compensate British farmers at level of 70% for costs of culling herds in which BSE cows are found, although EU codes call for only 50% compensation. The conditions of the offer are that U.K. government is to submit an acceptable anti-BSE culling program.

**April:** EU sets up high-level commission to recommend research projects on possible links between BSE and CJD, to be headed by Charles Weissman, director of the Institute of Molecular Biology in Zurich, Switzerland.

French government commissions medics to provide an expert opinion on potential risk to humans of BSE.

**March 18, 1996:** Government recalls British scientist group from Paris conference on spongiform encephalopathies, before they could speak there. The British group represents the 13-member U.K. Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAK), originally scheduled to report to international scientists on details of studies of 10 non-conventional cases of CJD in U.K., under study for possible BSE links.

**March 19:** U.K. Department of Health calls in Ogilvy and Mather advertising agency, to put together an ad campaign, intended to be run March 22 and 23, to damp the flak over unsafe meat.

**March 20:** British government spokesman states that BSE could be transmitted to humans, in the form of a variant of CJD. Health Minister Stephen Dorrell announces to Parliament that the BSE link to humans is being investigated. Media reports this as a bombshell.

**March 22:** Dr. Robert Will, U.K. representative to the EU veterinary meeting on BSE on this date, provides no written material of any kind to his counterparts. Will was author of March 20 report to Parliament on the subject of the potential transmissibility of encephalopathy between cows and humans.

**March 25:** U.K. Agriculture Ministry announces new restrictions on selling rendered animal proteins and bonemeal to farmers as animal feed.

Dr. Will, assigned to the EU veterinary group, again gives only an oral report on BSE situation in U.K. He opposes the otherwise unanimous decision of EU veterinary representatives to call for EU ban on exports of beef and cattle products from the U.K.

Prime Minister John Major calls Jacques Santer, president of EU Commission, and orders him to call another meeting of the veterinary council for March 26 to “double check” the March 25 decision. Major sends another delegation of “experts” to “convince” the veterinarians.

**March 27:** Lord William Rees-Mogg, in the London *Times*, plays down the U.K. government role in BSE, with an essay, “Mad about BSE,” saying that “diseases come and go, and their history is obscure.”

**April 1:** U.K. Treasury sets up fund of £118 million to aid “rendering industry”—a euphemism for Prosper de Mulder Ltd., which constitutes over 70% of industry—because animal by-product for animal feed is now prohibited.

Prosper de Mulder Ltd. and Agriculture Ministry are collaborating on using rendered cattle carcasses as fuel for power stations. De Mulder spokesman says, we want “to recover some value from it.” Mrs. Angela Browning, junior agriculture minister, says, “Rendered material for fuel has potential.” Charles Reynolds, for Prosper de Mulder, says that home-fuel use is possible, because the sand-like rendered product “will produce more energy per ton than chicken litter, which is used in power stations, and it has two-thirds the calorific value of coal.” The problem is, that burning meat and bonemeal leaves 25% of its input weight, whereas coal leaves only 8%—i.e., you have higher

**May 9:** In France, Dr. Dominique Dormont, a brain specialist, gives preliminary opinion to the government that there is possible risk of human disease from cows with BSE.

**May 20:** EU veterinary council rules that Britain's efforts to battle BSE are not convincing.

**May 21:** EU agriculture ministers decide not to lift the ban on secondary beef products from Britain, based on the previous day's EU veterinary group's decision that Britain's efforts to battle BSE are not convincing.



*Prime Minister John Major: "There is no scientific evidence that BSE can be transmitted to humans."*

**June 4:** French government receives official medical report from French experts, on the potential risks of BSE to infect humans—which danger, say French experts, needs two years further study, but meantime, precautions are required.

**June 5:** EU Commission decides to lift ban on certain of British cattle-derived products, including gelatin and bull semen. Germany says it will not comply with the EU Commission, and will continue ban on all British beef-related products. Germany, France, and other EU members continue to demand that the U.K. do more against BSE before ban on British beef exports will be lifted.

**June 6:** French Prime Minister Alain Juppé assembles his ministers for food, health, and research, and validates medical reports on BSE threat to humans.

**June 7:** Jean-François Girard, director-general of the French Health Ministry, holds a news conference to say that a new medical report by French experts concludes BSE should be assumed to carry a potential infection risk, pending further research, which could take two years. Government official in charge of research, Bernard Bigot, says France will provide an extra 3 million francs (nearly \$600,000) to a panel set up to study the disease. The number of researchers involved across France will be upped from 40, at present, to 100.

waste with the animal products.

**April 1:** Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg goes to EU agriculture ministers' meeting in Luxembourg; demands EU lifting of bans against British beef and beef-products exports.

**April 3:** Agriculture Minister Hogg gives press conference in Luxembourg, lasting only 22 seconds, stating his displeasure at the EU decision to continue ban on British beef, and displeasure at EU offer to compensate the U.K., at rate of 70% for costs incurred.

**April 4:** Agriculture Minister Hogg reports back to Parliament on EU decisions on U.K., beef, and BSE; he says, "The ban is not justified. It is inappropriate and should be removed."

**Early May:** Government begins program of slaughtering older cows, starting with about 10,000 cows a week; expects to rise to 15,000 animals per week. Government takes no other decisive anti-BSE actions.

**May 21:** British government demands that the EU Commission lift the ban on exports of secondary beef products from Britain—tallow, semen, and gelatin—now that cow-culling has started. Britain demands this as a first step to the EU throwing out the embargo on British meat and cattle products altogether. The EU refuses.

Prime Minister Major addresses Parliament on the EU refusal to acquiesce, accusing "unnamed partners, known to include the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, of breach of faith and a willful disregard of Britain's interests." Major announces that Britain will veto all decisions coming up in the European Union; it will adopt a policy of non-cooperation in the Inter-Governmental Conference, and "disrupt" the next EU heads of government summit in Florence, Italy, on June 21-22. Major threatens that Britain will refuse to sign any communiqué at Florence, and by that, turn the whole meeting into an absurdity. Major says that the cabinet is working on a package of "retaliatory options" to "punish" the European partners.

**June 5:** Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind and Agriculture Secretary Hogg meet in Rome with Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, host to upcoming June 20 Florence EU summit, to try to get a deal on EU backing down from bans on British beef and cattle, in exchange for U.K. giving up non-cooperation stance in EU.

**June 5-7:** Foreign Secretary Rifkind proceeds to five more European capitals to lobby for EU deal on phasing out bans against Britain. He presents EU leaders with four-page document listing ten areas for phase-out, including the right to export embryos, very young calves, beef from specialist herds reared on grass, and beef from cattle under 30 months of age. Government also wants right to export to third countries, "under special conditions."

**June 7:** Passports for U.K. cows are offered as anti-BSE action by Agriculture Ministry, for "public comment." The "cow papers" are intended to record all the animals' movements from their original herds, in case the animals later come down with BSE, and to provide traceability and identification if necessary. "It will be illegal to move cattle born after the new legislation comes into force without a cattle passport. Central records will be kept linking ear tag numbers with the animal's date of birth, breed, sex, and identification of dam."

**June 10:** Agriculture Secretary Hogg goes before Parliament to answer questions on how waste from rendering plants is being disposed of.

Dr. Alan Colchester, neurologist at Guy's Hospital, London, points to possibility of infective agents in effluent discharges from rendering plants, reaching humans through water supplies or direct contact. He calls for tightening regulations on rendering, stricter policing of rendering practices, and for the inspection process itself to be subject to audit.