SEAC
Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee

Hypothesis on the origin of BSE (Colchester & Colchester, 2005)

Issue

1. To consider a recently published article on a new theory on the origin of BSE.

Background

2. An article by Colchester & Colchester (Lancet, 02/09/05)[1] describes a hypothesis that BSE is derived originally from a human TSE. There are a number of strands to the hypothesis:

   (i) mammalian bone and carcass material was imported into the UK from the Indian subcontinent in the 1960s and 70s.

   (ii) because of local practices in India and Pakistan this material may have included human remains.

   (iii) some of the remains may have been derived from humans infected with a TSE.

   (iv) TSE (i.e. BSE) infection in UK cattle occurred as a result of incorporation of this potentially human TSE-contaminated material into animal feed.

3. The arguments in support of the hypothesis are presented in the article. The article together with a commentary on the article are at Annex 1.

Advice sought from the committee

4. The committee is asked to comment on the hypothesis.

[1] Colchester & Colchester (2005) The origin of bovine spongiform encephalopathy: the human prion disease hypothesis. *Lancet*. 366, 856-861.

ANNEX 1

- Colchester & Colchester (2005) The origin of bovine spongiform encephalopathy: the human prion disease hypothesis. *Lancet*. 366, 856-861.

- Commentary on the above paper by Shankar & Satshchandra (2005) Did BSE in the UK originate from the Indian subcontinent? *Lancet*. 366, 790-791.