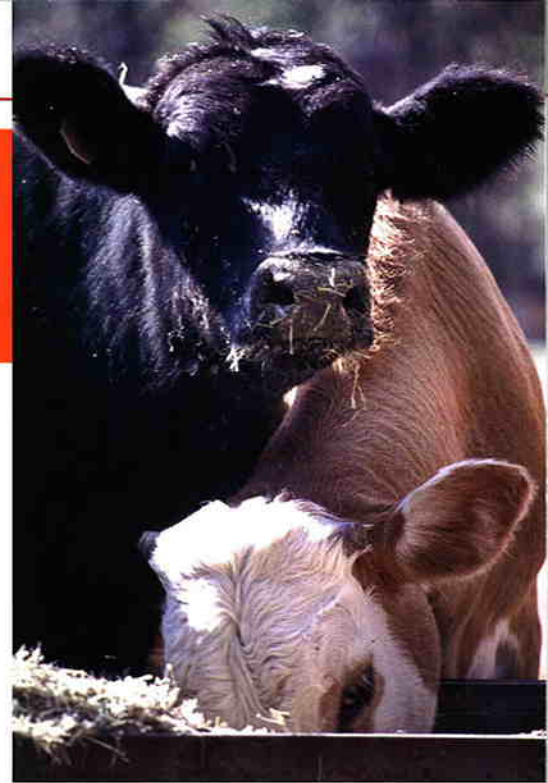


Audit finds high compliance with ruminant protein regulations



Biosecurity New Zealand (BNZ) launched the Ruminant Protein Regulations Compliance Verification Audit Programme in May 2006. One of its aims was to inform those in the animal feed manufacturing and supply business about the objectives and requirements of the Biosecurity (Ruminant Protein) Regulations 1999. Ensuring compliance with the regulations was another major objective.

New Zealand is free from bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or 'mad cow disease') and other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. The objective of the Ruminant Protein Regulations is to prevent the spread of BSE if it were ever to occur in New Zealand. The regulations prohibit the feeding of ruminant protein (such as meat and bone meal) in any form to ruminants, as BSE is spread through the consumption of ingredients derived from BSE-infected cattle. The brain of a single BSE-infected cow can potentially spread the disease to 5,000 other cows through this feed route.

A team of 18 New Zealand Food Safety Authority Verification Agency inspectors, who were trained and warranted for the compliance verification programme, audited 203 premises on site. These included feed manufacturers, renderers, feed retailers, bulk feed importers, organic fertiliser manufacturers and feed transport and storage firms.

The auditors presented each premises with a folder containing all they needed to know about the ruminant protein feed

ban, including a poster to advise feed buyers about the regulatory labelling on the packages that should be checked before purchasing feed. Stores belonging to chains like CRT, Farmlands, PGG Wrightson, RD1 and Williams & Kettle were provided with the educational material through their corporate headquarters. Initial discussions with these chains indicated that compliance audits are best done centrally, as this would ensure uniformity across stores. Statements of compliance with the Ruminant Protein Regulations as requested by BNZ from these stores are now being received.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of feed supply and manufacturing premises covered under the audit programme.

The key finding of the programme is that there is a high level of compliance with the ruminant protein regulations. Non-compliances mainly concerned labelling. BNZ believes that the compliance programme covered almost all premises in New Zealand's feed supply and manufacturing sector. Those that may not have been included in this programme include on-farm mixers and some mobile feed manufacturers. Plans are being drawn up to inform these two categories as well.

Premises that produce feed for ruminant animals and also render, use or store ruminant protein are required by the regulations to have a BNZ-registered ruminant protein control programme (RPCP). From 1 July 2006, RPCP operators have had to comply with new requirements

that prohibit the sharing of equipment for producing feed for ruminants with feed that contains ruminant protein. A number of premises were unable to meet the new requirements and opted to de-register their control programmes. These have either removed ruminant protein from their feed formulations or have switched to producing feed exclusively for non-ruminants. Currently, there are only 10 registered RPCP operators and this number is not expected to increase in the near future.

In October 2006, a team of four auditors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission made an on-site assessment of New Zealand's ruminant protein feed ban. The team was satisfied with the implementation of the feed ban in New Zealand, especially the introduction of the separate feed line requirements. BNZ is finalising an action plan to implement the recommendations the team made to mitigate any further risks. The FVO's final report should be available on their website in the first quarter of 2007.

BNZ is currently reviewing the Ruminant Protein Regulations. A document on minimum standards for transport of animal feed is also in draft. These two documents are expected to be released for public consultation in the first quarter of 2007.

For a list of registered ruminant protein control programme operators:

- www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests-diseases/animals/tse/papers/ruminant-feeding-regulations/rpcp.htm

For information about the ruminant protein feed ban:

- www.biosecurity.govt.nz/tse
- Nasser Ahmed, Adviser Animal Response, Biosecurity New Zealand, phone 04 894 0550, nasser.ahmed@maf.govt.nz

Table 1: Number of feed supply and manufacturing premises covered under the Ruminant Protein Regulations Compliance Verification Audit Programme.

Feed manufacturers (static)	98
RPCP operator	10
RP-free feed producer	75
Non-ruminant feed producer	13
Feed manufacturers (mobile)	6
Dedicated ruminant and non-ruminant equipment	1
RP-free feed only	4
Non-ruminant feed only	1
Renderers	48
Ruminant tissue	39
Fish only	7
Poultry only	1
Fish and poultry	1
Feed retailers	249
Feed importers	5
Organic fertiliser manufacturers	5
Feed transport and storage firms	20
TOTAL	431