

## How is our food protected?

- All cattle are inspected for signs of BSE before slaughter and any suspect animals are destroyed and kept out of the food chain.
- The cause of BSE is an infectious 'prion' and this is in the nervous tissue of animals.
- This nervous tissue is called 'Specified Risk Material' and is removed from all cattle.
- Feeding meat and bonemeal to cattle is also banned to prevent recycling this infectious prion.
- 'Mechanically recovered meat' from beef carcasses can no longer be used in food products.

## What is BSE and how is it related to vCJD?

BSE is a disease affecting cattle and in extremely rare cases it has been transmitted to people causing them to develop vCJD. Since the connection was discovered in 1996, 167 people worldwide have developed the disease. A total of three people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have died from this fatal disease. Because of the series of controls in place to protect public health the likelihood of contracting the vCJD from consuming meat or meat products on the island of Ireland is now extremely rare.

## What about other foods?

### • Is gelatine safe to eat?

Yes. Gelatine manufacture excludes all specified risk materials and further processing excludes any risk of BSE surviving.

### • Is it safe to eat meat from other countries?

Meat and meat products from EU countries are subject to some, but not all, of the BSE controls in place on the island of Ireland. If you are concerned check the country of origin before buying it.

### • Is there any risk from drinking cows' milk?

There is no known risk of BSE associated with milk.

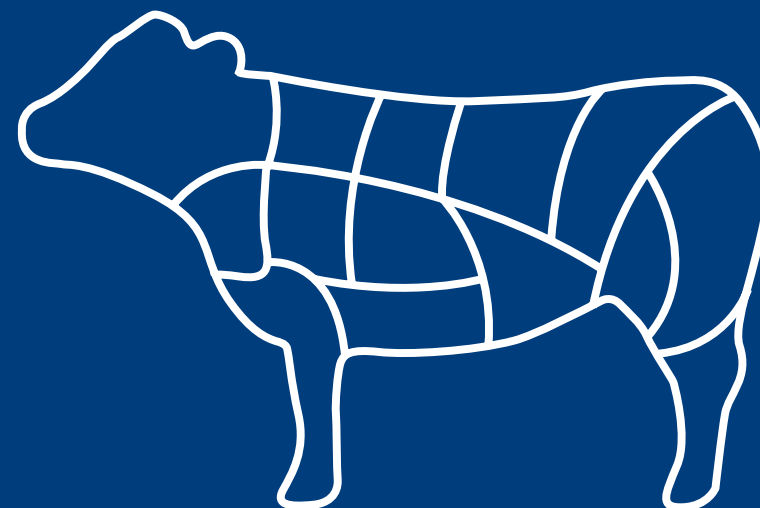
### • Is there a BSE risk from pigs, sheep or poultry?

There is no known risk associated with meat from these animals.

Prepared by **safefood** in co-operation with the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

# bse

## How safe is beef today?



The Departments of Agriculture in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland monitor cattle to make sure that no BSE-infected cattle enter the food chain. Their strict controls mean that there is now an extremely low risk of contracting the human form of BSE, 'variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease' (vCJD), from consuming meat or meat products you buy from reputable sources on the island of Ireland.