

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004694/16
to the Commission**

Luke Ming Flanagan (GUE/NGL)
(7 June 2016)

Subject: Plain and chromic catgut

Plain and chromic catgut are widely used throughout the world in the manufacture of absorbable surgical and veterinary sutures.

Owing to the BSE crisis, the European Union issued Regulations (EC) No 999/2001, (EC) No 1774/2002 and (EC) No 1069/2009 in order to prevent BSE and the subsequent contraction of CJD by humans. These regulations effectively banned the production and sale of catgut for sutures in the EU.

A new Commission Regulation ((EU) 2015/728) has been introduced across the Member States, which allows for the production of edible beef casings in the EU. Beef casings are also the raw material used in the production of plain and chromic catgut.

Can the Commission confirm whether the new regulation allows for the production of plain and chromic catgut from EU-sourced raw materials and/or the importation of raw materials from GBR 1 countries for the production of plain and chromic catgut and/or the placing on EU markets of EU-produced plain and chromic catgut.

Can the Commission also confirm whether there is any derogation to Regulation (EU) 2015/728 open to Member States which allows for the production of plain and chromic catgut from EU-sourced raw materials and raw materials from GBR 1 countries?

Answer given by Mr Andriukaitis on behalf of the Commission
(25 July 2016)

Until 2015, Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 ⁽¹⁾ defined the whole intestine of bovine animals of any age originating from countries with controlled or undetermined BSE (Bovine spongiform encephalopathy) risk as specified risk material. Such intestinal material had to be removed from the food chain and be destroyed. For this reason, until 2015, it was not allowed to produce catgut from bovine intestines, unless such bovine intestines originated from non-EU countries with negligible BSE risk.

In 2015, two amendments to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 — Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/728 ⁽²⁾ and Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/1162 ⁽³⁾ — modified those rules. With the new legal framework currently in force, any part of the intestine of bovine animals originating from Member States or non-EU countries with negligible BSE risk (corresponding to the former GBR I category) can be used for the food chain, for the production of pet food, or for technical uses such as the production of catgut, in accordance with Article 14(j) of Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 ⁽⁴⁾. Furthermore, parts of the intestines other than the last 4 meters of the small intestine, the caecum and the mesentery, of bovine animals originating from Member States or non-EU countries with controlled or undetermined BSE risk (corresponding to the former GBR II, III and IV categories), can also be used for the food chain, for the production of pet food, or for technical uses such as the production of catgut, in accordance with Article 14(j) of Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22.5.2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (OJ L 147 31.5.2001, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/728 of 6.5.2015 amending the definition of specified risk material set out in Annex V to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (OJ L 116, 7.5.2015, p. 1).

⁽³⁾ Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/1162 of 15.7.2015 amending Annex V to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies OJ L 188, 16.7.2015, p. 3.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21.10.2009 laying down health rules as regards animal by-products and derived products not intended for human consumption and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002 (Animal by-products Regulation) (OJ L 300, 14.11.2009, p. 1).