

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3746/00
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to the Commission

Subject: TSE in pigs

What do we actually know about prions, the agents which pass on TSE and Creutzfeld-Jacobs disease? No-one knows exactly how this protein becomes a hazard but we do know that it does.

The disease is spread via feedstuffs and food and the incubation period can extend over several years. Contagious prions have already crossed two species barriers, from sheep to cattle and from cattle to humans. We have also known for more than ten years that prions enter the food chain via meal containing animal remains.

Pigs are fed the same type of foodstuffs as cattle and have the same digestive system as humans. The reason pigs have so far not demonstrated TSE symptoms might well be that they do not live long enough for the disease to develop.

Can the Commission therefore exclude the possibility that pigs might be carriers of TSE?

If not, when does the Commission intend to propose that TSE tests are also carried out on pigmeat?