The first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or “mad-cow disease”) was reported in the United Kingdom in 1986. Through November 2000, over 180,000 head of cattle have been diagnosed with BSE.

It is believed that the outbreak can be traced to the same source: rendered feed ingredients (meat-and-bone meal) contaminated with a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) agent.

Meat-and-bone meal (MBM) is produced by rendering discarded animal fat, bones, offal, whole carcasses and other “mixed materials” from bovine, ovine, porcine, poultry and other sources as a high-protein nutritional supplement.

BSE has the same clinical, neuropathological, molecular and transmission characteristics as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), a fatal neurodegenerative disorder affecting humans.

In the United States, there are over 100 million head of cattle. While this represents 10 percent of the world’s cattle inventory, the United States produces nearly 25 percent — or 25.7 billion pounds — of the world’s consumable beef supply (National Cattlemen’s Beef Association; Reuters).

Sales of cattle and calves in the U.S. totaled over $36 billion in 1999 (National Cattlemen’s Beef Association; Reuters).

U.S. economic activity associated with the feeding, raising, processing, transporting and marketing of beef products was estimated to be greater than $180 billion in 1999 (National Cattlemen’s Beef Association; Reuters).

More than one million jobs are directly derived from the beef industry (National Cattlemen’s Beef Association; Reuters).

For more information about “mad-cow disease”:

- Yahoo, Full News Coverage: “Mad Cow Disease”: [http://dailynews.yahoo.com/fc/Health/Mad_Cow_Disease](http://dailynews.yahoo.com/fc/Health/Mad_Cow_Disease)

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