June 2022

The Demise of the Beef Industry

Natalie Powers
njpm67@umsystem.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://irl.umsl.edu/urs

Part of the Economic History Commons, History of Science, Technology, and Medicine Commons, and the Social History Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the UMSL Undergraduate Works at IRL @ UMSL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of IRL @ UMSL. For more information, please contact marvinh@umsl.edu.
Mad Cow: The Demise of the Beef Industry
Natalie Powers (Advisor: Rob Wilson, Ph.D.)

Introduction:
❖ Mad cow disease is formally known as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).
❖ It was nicknamed mad cow disease for the manic behavior observed in the infected cattle.
❖ Mad cow disease halted trading and nearly took down an entire industry, twice.
❖ The disease has the ability to mutate and infect other species, such as humans.

Methodology:
❖ Denis Poulin and Attah K. Boame, “Mad cow disease and beef trade.”
❖ Hyun Joung Jin, Anatoly Skripnitchenko, and Won W. Koo, “The Effects of the BSE Outbreak in the United States on the Beef and Cattle Industry”
❖ Stephen Devadoss, David W. Holland, Leroy Stodick, and Joydeep Ghosh, “A General Equilibrium Analysis of Foreign and Domestic Demand Shocks Arising from Mad Cow Disease in the United States.”
❖ “Timeline: Mad Cow Disease Outbreaks: Timeline of Mad Cow Disease Outbreaks.” Center for Food Safety.

Research Findings:
❖ BSE was first discovered in Britain in 1986.
❖ It is caused by a mutation of the prion protein which attacks the nervous system until the host inevitably dies.
❖ In 1996, 4.5 million cattle were destroyed following the correlation of the mutation of BSE found in humans known as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.
❖ Restaurants, stores, and farmers lost a significant number of profits, ranging from 5-50%, during and after the outbreak.
❖ In May of 2003, single infected cow was found in Canada. As a result, beef prices went from $1.10 to $.35 per pound.
❖ Countries that imported beef from Canada, such as the US, halted trading with Canada to prevent the spread of BSE.
❖ The bans also effected the trading of other products such as dairy and animals for stock breeding.

Conclusion:
❖ Most epidemics of mad cow have been small. Yet, they caused an enormous economic impact.
❖ The fear consumers felt surrounding the disease caused the evasion of the industry.
❖ Consumers boycotted most, if not all, cow products to protect themselves and their families.
❖ Anxiety surrounding Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease forced businesses to switch from beef to another alternative.
❖ Pork, chicken, and fish industries had an increase in sales after a case of BSE was discovered.
❖ Businesses who associate with the beef industry suffered the financial and reputational implications of mad cow.
❖ They, along with the beef industry, have been stained with the name of mad cow.

The variety of beef in stores shows how widely it is consumed and the impact BSE would have.