



Diseases Fact Sheet - Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), also known as mad cow disease, is a progressive neurological disorder found in cattle. When cattle have this disease, it begins to deteriorate the brain and nervous system.

BSE is one of the few [prion diseases](#) found in animals. There are others that affect people, including [Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease](#). Prion diseases are rare neurodegenerative disorders that are rapidly progressive and are always fatal to the infected party.

How does this affect people?

According to the CDC, there's a casual association between BSE and [variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease \(vCJD\)](#). Consumption of BSE-contaminated food could lead to vCJD, which is a deadly [prion disease](#) and has no known treatment.

Please visit the CDC website for more information on [Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy](#).