



Statement
of the EFSA Scientific Expert Working Group on BSE/TSE
of the Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards
on the health risks of the consumption
of milk and milk derived products from goats

The former Scientific Steering Committee of the European Commission and recently the European Food Safety Authority (in its opinion related to TSE surveillance and product safety in small ruminants) have recommended that research should intensify on the safety of milk of small ruminants with regard to TSE risks. Despite these repeated recommendations there is very limited published research data on TSE in goats and infectivity of goat products. Although limited new data are expected to be published in the near future, there is still little research initiated in this area.

Some research data support the finding that milk, colostrum and tissues of the mammary gland from bovines can be classified in the category of no detectable infectivity. However, based on a number of observations from research data, mainly research concerning sheep, there are indications that infectivity in the milk from small ruminants cannot be totally excluded. In case of mastitis, one could expect an infiltration of potentially infected blood into the milk as the blood-milk barrier may not or only partly exist. But even in the case of absence of mastitis the barrier may not be 100% effective.

From the limited data available today it is concluded that in the light of current scientific knowledge and irrespective of their geographical origin, milk and milk derivatives (e.g. lactoferrin, lactose) from small ruminants are unlikely to present any risk of TSE contamination provided that milk is sourced from clinically healthy animals. Exclusion of animals with mastitis is considered to reduce the potential risk. Further assurance of healthy milk could include milk tests for total somatic cell counts indicative of inflammation.