

# **Animal Health, Food Safety and the Information Requirements - the Case of BSE in Canada**

Michael Trant  
Agriculture Division, Statistics Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1A 0T6  
[mike.trant@statcan.ca](mailto:mike.trant@statcan.ca)  
Tel: (613) 951-2859 Fax: (613) 951-3868

Statistical agencies are clearly not responsible for animal health and food safety. Protecting the health of citizens from food borne illness and establishing food safety procedures and regulations is the role of other government departments. Once a food borne illness or animal disease has been identified and traced however, the statistical agency can play a role in providing timely measures of the impact on the economy and of consumer confidence in the government's response and efforts to protect human health.

A food safety crisis, resulting from diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans, such as, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease, can be described and measured relatively quickly using basic statistical information that is readily available to government economists and statisticians. The basic requirements are for data on production, inventories, domestic sales, imports, exports, and prices.

This article is an attempt to show that some basic aggregate agricultural statistics on imports, exports, livestock slaughter, farms sales of cattle, farm product prices for cattle and calves, and consumer prices for meat can provide timely insights on an issue such as the impact of the trade embargo on the Canadian beef industry following the discovery of a single case of BSE.