

WORLD TRADE  
ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

G/SPS/N/ZAF/1

11 April 1996

(96-1275)

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

NOTIFICATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURES

1.	<b>Member to Agreement notifying:</b> <u>SOUTH AFRICA</u> <b>If applicable, name of local government involved:</b>
2.	<b>Agency responsible:</b> National Department of Agriculture
3.	<b>Products covered (tariff item number(s) as specified in national schedules deposited with the WTO. ICS numbers may be provided in addition, where applicable):</b> HS: 02.02 Beef - frozen deboned
4.	<b>Title and number of pages of the notified document:</b> Steps taken by the Department of Agriculture regarding importation of beef from the United Kingdom.
5.	<b>Description of content:</b> Temporary suspension of the importation of beef from the United Kingdom due to the possible health threat of the occurrence of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle in the United Kingdom
6.	<b>Objective and rationale:</b> Protection of human health
7.	<b>Nature of the urgent problem(s):</b> The health threat of meat imported from the United Kingdom originating from a herd where BSE could occur.
8.	<b>An international standard, guideline or recommendation does not exist [ ].</b> <b>If an international standard, guideline or recommendation exists, whenever possible, identify deviations:</b> The guideline was drawn up prior to the discovery of new scientific facts.
9.	<b>Relevant documents and language(s) in which these are available:</b> News Release by Minister R. F. Botha, Acting Minister of Agriculture, dated 22 March 1996. Document available in English.
10.	<b>Date of entry into force/period of application (as applicable):</b> 22 March 1996 until such time as the position regarding the certification of beef from the UK to be free of BSE has been cleared between South Africa and the United Kingdom.

**11. Texts available from/comments to: National enquiry point [X] or address and telefax number of other body:**

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**EMBARGO: IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 22 MARCH 1996**

**NEWS RELEASE BY MINISTER R. F. (PIK) BOTHA,  
ACTING MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE**

**STEPS TAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REGARDING  
IMPORTATION OF BEEF FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM**

On the advice of officials of the Department of Agriculture, Minister Pik Botha, in his capacity as acting Minister of Agriculture, has temporarily suspended the importation of beef from the United Kingdom. The suspension is immediately effective.

This step follows on the great concern amongst the South African public about the latest developments regarding the occurrence of BSE (also called mad cow disease) in cattle in the United Kingdom. The temporary suspension will give the Departments of Agriculture with the assistance of Health in South Africa the opportunity to urgently confer with their counterparts in the United Kingdom and to clear up the position regarding the certification of beef from the UK to be free of BSE. Arrangements are now being made for a high level technical team to visit the UK for this purpose.

The relatively small quantities of beef imported from the UK have all been certified by the British Veterinary authorities as free from BSE and therefore safe for human consumption.

Unfortunately the virus or sub-virus causing the disease cannot be detected in meat by routine inspection. However, as it only occurs in nervous and lymphatic tissues of affected cattle, special precautions were taken by the South African authorities in the past. Only manually deboned meat of which the nervous tissue, lymphatic tissue and glands were removed were allowed to be imported. Furthermore the United Kingdom authorities had to certify that only beef originating from a herd where no case of BSE occurred during the previous five years could be cleared for export to South Africa. This certification was received by the South African Veterinary Authorities in all cases of meat already imported. The public can therefore rest assured that every precaution was taken to ensure that no BSE-infected beef was imported.

**ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CAPE TOWN AND PRETORIA**

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