

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001849/26
to the Commission
Biljana Borzan (S&D)
(6 May 2026)**

Subject: Proposed changes to BSE rules in the food and feed safety omnibus

The food and feed safety omnibus proposed by the Commission includes significant amendments to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 ⁽¹⁾ regarding rules on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The Commission is asked to clarify two key issues:

1. Why were regulatory changes proposed while the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was still preparing two critical scientific opinions: one on adapting monitoring and surveillance requirements to international standards (published only on 27 April 2026, four months after the proposal), and another on revising the list of specified risk materials (still pending)?
2. To what extent are the proposed changes to BSE monitoring and surveillance aligned with EFSA's 27 April 2026 opinion, and how will the Commission ensure a high level of protection for human and animal health?

EFSA's assessment appears cautious regarding modifications to EU BSE rules. It highlights that the absence of clear clinical signs complicates surveillance based solely on clinical detection, as early symptoms may be subtle or non-specific. It also warns that shifting from the current combined active and passive surveillance system to a model targeting only clinically affected animals would represent a fundamental change. Crucially, EFSA estimates that such an approach could reduce detection capacity by two to twenty times, potentially weakening the ability to identify both atypical cases and any future re-emergence of classical BSE.

Submitted: 6.5.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(18 June 2026)**

The proposal under the Food and Feed Safety Omnibus ⁽¹⁾ does not amend the current bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) surveillance system or the list of specified risk materials (SRM).

It aims at changing the legal framework procedurally to allow future adaptations to reflect in a more timely manner the developments in the epidemiological situation, scientific knowledge, international standards, analytical methods and implementation experience, while taking into account European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opinions and ensuring a high level of protection of human and animal health. The current BSE surveillance and SRM measures therefore remain unchanged.

Accordingly, no alignment with the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) scientific opinion ⁽²⁾ was necessary within this proposal.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (OJ L 147, 31.5.2001, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2001/999/oj>).

⁽¹⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/simplification-legislation_en.

⁽²⁾ <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2026.10044>.