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Testing for Surveillance Protocols – Canada and U.S.

Prepared by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association

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- In both Canada and the U.S., animals sampled for BSE surveillance purposes are screened using a **rapid test** for BSE. In Canada rapid tests approved for use are the BioRad ELISA test and the Prionics rapid western blot test.
- If the rapid test is negative, the animal is deemed not to have BSE.
- If the rapid test is inconclusive, in both Canada and the U.S. the sample is submitted for the next level of testing, the **Immunohistochemistry (IHC)** test. The IHC is an internationally recognized confirmatory test for BSE.
- If the IHC test is positive, the animal is confirmed to have BSE.
- If the IHC test is negative, the animal may be presumed not to have BSE (as was the case with 3 presumptive positive cases in the U.S.) or samples may be submitted for further testing. In all 3 presumptive positives found in Canada, the IHC test returned a positive result.
- In the U.S., the Office of the Inspector General recommended that the 3 samples that were presumptive positive on the rapid test, then negative on the IHC test, be re-tested with a second internationally recognized confirmatory test, the SAF immunoblot test, an in-depth western blot test. Two of the samples again came back negative; the third came back positive. That sample is now being re-tested at the BSE World Reference Laboratory in Weybridge, England.