

Japan: Suspension of all shipments of beef cattle from Fukushima Prefecture

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Japan suspends Fukushima beef shipments over radioactive feed

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The government on Tuesday ordered the suspension of all shipments of beef cattle from Fukushima Prefecture until the safety of the meat can be confirmed, while officials scrambled to expand probes into farms and distributors nationwide to grasp the scale of contamination suspected in cattle fed with rice straw containing high levels of radiation.

The decision came as the nation comes to terms with the discovery that about 650 cows, suspected of being contaminated with radioactive cesium likely to have been spewed from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, have been shipped to at least 38 of Japan's 47 prefectures.

To prevent further contamination of beef supply, the central government's nuclear disaster task force ordered Fukushima Prefecture to suspend shipments of beef cattle from all parts of the prefecture until conditions for lifting the ban are met.

Although Fukushima Prefecture, from which 554 cows suspected of contamination were shipped, had already asked its farmers to voluntarily suspend through Tuesday all shipping and transporting of beef cattle, the task force has concluded it necessary to stop shipments until preparations for inspections are put in place and the safety of the meat can be confirmed.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Naoto Kan apologized on Tuesday over the contamination issue, saying, "I feel responsibility for not being able to prevent this from happening and I am extremely sorry."

Separately, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano apologized for the government's failure to ensure that all farmers were informed of a government notice asking them not to use livestock feed stored outdoors.

Edano, the top government spokesman, said affected farmers will be compensated for the economic and psychological damage they suffer from the latest developments, and that the government will also pay for their losses resulting from the fall in beef prices.

Also on Tuesday, farm minister Michihiko Kano said the government will expand the scope of an emergency survey on the use of rice straw to

cover all cattle farmers nationwide, after elevated levels of radioactive cesium were found in straw beyond Fukushima and 10 other prefectures currently under review.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will also begin to survey rice straw distributors nationwide on their procurement and sales routes, officials said Tuesday.

"By working in unison with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, we will make sure (cesium-tainted) beef will not find its way onto the market," farm minister Kano told a news conference.

Meanwhile, surveys on farmers producing rice straw will continue to be limited to those in Fukushima and the 10 other relatively nearby prefectures, including Tokyo, Chiba and Kanagawa.

The number of cows found to have been shipped after being fed contaminated rice straw totaled 648 as of Tuesday from Fukushima, Niigata and Yamagata prefectures. The latter two prefectures are not included in the shipment ban as tests showed no cesium in beef there.

Beef from the cattle has been shipped to at least 38 of Japan's 47 prefectures. Some of the beef from Fukushima was tested and showed high levels of radioactive cesium, beyond the government-set limit.

The health ministry has said that eating beef a few times with levels of radioactive cesium greater than the limit would not affect health.

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<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20110719p2g00m0dm044000c.html>

Over 1,300 cattle suspected of radiation contamination shipped

TOKYO (Kyodo) — A total of 1,349 cattle suspected of being fed rice straw containing radioactive cesium have been shipped to 45 of Japan's 47 prefectures, a Kyodo News tally showed Wednesday.

On Wednesday, prefectural surveys revealed 699 cattle suspected of such contamination were shipped from farms in Iwate, Akita, Gunma, Niigata, Gifu and Shizuoka prefectures, adding to another herd of such cattle found to have been shipped from farms in Niigata, Fukushima, Yamagata and Saitama prefectures.

In Iwate, up to 57,000 becquerels of radioactive cesium per kilogram — far above the government-set limit of 300 becquerels — was detected in rice straw given to cattle at five farms in Ichinoseki and Fujisawa, according to the prefectural government. It was the first time that such cesium has been detected from rice straw produced in the prefecture.

Farms in Shizuoka, Akita, Gunma and Gifu had been feeding their cattle with rice straw produced in the city of Tome, Miyagi Prefecture, bringing the total number of prefectures that have received shipments of Miyagi-produced rice straw to eight.

Radioactive cesium was believed to have emitted from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

While over 1,000 cattle suspected of radioactive contamination were confirmed to have been shipped, less than 10 percent of beef were inspected. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare decided Wednesday to request municipalities across Japan to put priority on inspecting beef already in the market rather than monitoring vegetables and other products waiting to be shipped.

Farms in Fujinomiya, Shizuoka Prefecture, purchased 70 tons of rice straw produced in Tome. From the straw, 9,380 becquerels of cesium per kg was detected.

In Akita farms, 20,000 becquerels of cesium per kg was detected from straw purchased from a dealer in Tome. A farm in Ota, Gunma Prefecture, purchased about 68 tons of rice straw from a Tome dealer.

In Iwate, where a high level of cesium was detected in rice straws fed to cattle in five farms in Ichinoseki and Fujisawa, it was found that seven other farms in the two municipalities had been feeding cattle with rice straw gathered after the nuclear accident at the Fukushima power plant. But authorities were not able to inspect the rice straw because none was left. From the 12 farms, 81 cattle were shipped.

Miyagi Prefecture has said 64 farms in the prefecture fed their cattle with rice straw gathered after the nuclear accident and that at least 200 cattle had been shipped from 20 farms.

On Wednesday, Iwate Prefecture asked farms not to feed cattle with straw gathered from rice paddies after the nuclear accident and not to ship their cattle fed with the rice straw. Shizuoka Prefecture will also take steps to make sure all farmers are aware that they must not purchase straws suspected of contamination.

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<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/07/21/20110721p2g00m0dm009000c.html>

Japan Experts Agree on Limit on Radiation Exposure from Food

Tokyo, July 21 (Jiji Press)—Japanese experts reached broad agreement Thursday to limit lifetime radiation dose from food to 100 millisieverts or less per person.

A subcommittee of the government's Food Safety Commission plans to finalize the proposal next week.

Present rules set the limit on radiation dose at 5 millisieverts per year for cesium and at 2 millisieverts per year for iodine.

Based on the figures, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry sets permissible radiation levels for food.

The latest proposal may make the limits stricter, sources familiar with the matter said.

More tainted beef shipped from Fukushima farms

Extremely high cesium levels found in cattle feed; government ban looms

FUKUSHIMA – Seven more farms in Fukushima Prefecture fed their beef cattle rice straw contaminated with radioactive cesium, effectively adding 411 more cows suspected of having been exposed to the isotope into the nation's meat distribution chain, the Fukushima Prefectural Government said Monday.

Of the cows shipped from the farms, 199 went to Tokyo, 192 to Hyogo Prefecture, nine to Gunma Prefecture, eight within Fukushima Prefecture, two to Tochigi Prefecture and one to Saitama Prefecture.

The remaining straw feed tested at the farms contained cesium reaching 690,000 becquerels per kg, far above the 500 becquerel per kg allowable limits and the highest concentrations found so far.

The government plans to suspend shipments of beef cattle from Fukushima Prefecture possibly from Tuesday in line with a law pertaining to nuclear disasters.

The straw was apparently contaminated by the release of massive amounts of radioactive materials from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant soon after it was crippled by the March 11 megaquake and tsunami.

Two of the farms are in Koriyama. The towns of Nihonmatsu, Motomiya, Sukagawa, Shirakawa and Aizubange account for one each. The highest level of cesium was found in straw at the farm in Motomiya.

One of the farms had bought straw from a dealer in Miyagi Prefecture and another from a dealer within Fukushima Prefecture, the prefecture said.

It added that six of the farms were not aware of a government notice in March that warned against giving livestock feed that had been kept outdoors.

Fukushima Prefecture has banned the seven farms from feeding their livestock rice straw and asked them to refrain from shipping or transporting beef cattle.

The central government is considering halting beef cattle shipments from areas beyond Fukushima Prefecture, after ascertaining how widespread the contaminated straw is, according to government sources.

Meanwhile, the Niigata Prefectural Government said it has detected elevated levels of radioactive cesium from straw produced in Miyagi Prefecture and given to cattle at two farms. Of the two farms, one has already shipped 24 cows.

Miyagi has begun talks with all 915 farms that raise beef cattle in the prefecture to determine

whether they have fed their cows rice straw that had been bundled after the nuclear disaster.

It may announce the outcome of its talks Tuesday, local government officials said.

Separately, 84 cows from five cattle farms in Fukushima Prefecture have been shipped to at least 17 prefectures. The meat of one of them contained levels of radioactive cesium greater than the government-set limit, while the levels of the isotope contained in the meat of two other cows were within the limit.

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<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110719a2.html>
