Only three cows, one of Canadian origin, have tested positive for BSE in the United States. This is in sharp contrast to Europe, which has diagnosed more than 190,000 since 1986. The graphic below details the firewalls required by the U.S. government and implemented by the feed, rendering, cattle and meat industries to protect cattle herds and keep U.S. beef safe.

Federal government inspects borders. The U.S. allow imports only from countries at “minimal risk” for BSE. Only food products that have been shown to be safe and do not harbor the infective agent may be imported.

In 1997, FDA banned the use of ruminant proteins in feed for cattle and other ruminants.

In 2009, FDA will add new requirements to remove certain ruminant materials from all animal feed.

Industry certification/affidavits help ensure compliance with the ban.

FDA inspectors check mills for compliance, which is now at 99%.

Producers require feed companies to certify that feed is produced in compliance with federal law, which requires that ruminant protein is not fed to cattle and other ruminants.

USDA conducts surveillance programs to detect BSE.

Packers require producers to certify that animals are fed in compliance with FDA feed rules.

USDA veterinarians inspect all animals destined for slaughter. Non-ambulatory cattle do not enter the food chain. Government mandates that animals tested for BSE must be held pending test results. Specified risk materials are required to be removed from the food chain.

Separate facilities or processing lines are used. Mills manufacturing feed for ruminants cannot use any ruminant derived protein in the ration.

Rendered ruminant protein is sent to feed mills for inclusion in non-ruminant feed formulations.

FDA requires renderers to separate ruminant and non-ruminant proteins in rendering facilities.

Industry created third-party certification program to complement the FDA feed rule and to ensure industry-wide compliance.

Rendering plants process raw material from packing plants and other sources.

1 A ruminant animal has a compartmentalized stomach and includes cattle, sheep, goats, deer and elk.

2 Specified risk materials include skull, brain, trigeminal ganglia, eyes, spinal cord and the dorsal root ganglia from cattle 30 months of age and older; and distal ileum and tonsils from cattle of all ages.