

Q & A

What do I need to know about the official status procedures related to the new BSE standards?

This Q&A aims to clarify some procedural aspects concerning the new Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) standards and their implementation for the procedures of official recognition, annual reconfirmation, and maintenance of BSE risk status proposed for adoption at the May 2023 General Session.

Q1. Which BSE standards should be referred to if my country is planning to submit an application to WOAHA for the recognition of official BSE (controlled or negligible) risk status during the 2023-2024 evaluation cycle?

A. The BSE standards in Chapters 1.8 and 11.4 of the 2022 edition of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)* should be used. As the 2023 edition of the *Terrestrial Code* will replace the 2022 version on WOAHA's website after the General Session of May 2023, Chapters 1.8 and 11.4 of the 2022 edition of the *Terrestrial Code* will remain available on the dedicated website for official status recognition (www.woah.org/official-status). Applications based on the new BSE standards will only be accepted from the 2024-2025 evaluation cycle.

Q2. Why delay the use of the new BSE standards for official status procedures until May 2024?

A. The new BSE standards will enter into force the day after the General Session of May 2023. Nevertheless, WOAHA acknowledges the challenges and time it takes for Members to modify and adapt their current BSE risk management measures and surveillance systems in accordance with the new BSE standards, hence the one-year delay for the application of procedures for official recognition and annual reconfirmation of BSE risk status.

Q3. Could you further elaborate on the delay and specify how it relates to the new BSE standards (please refer to Annex 1 for further details)?

A.

New BSE standards related to:	Applies from May 2023*	Applies from May 2024*
Application for official recognition of BSE risk status		X ¹
Annual reconfirmation of BSE risk status		X ¹
Maintenance of BSE risk status after the occurrence of an indigenous case of classical BSE	X	
Surveillance/risk management	Transition period	X
Trade recommendations	X	

* After WOAHA's General Session

¹ Members should follow the new application/reconfirmation form.

Q4. How is the date from which the risk of the BSE agents being recycled within the cattle population has been negligible (starting date) estimated?

A. The Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (hereafter the Scientific Commission) agreed that the year of official recognition of the BSE risk status by WOAHA could be used by all Members to estimate the starting date:

- For countries and zones with negligible BSE risk status: at least eight years prior to the year of official recognition by WOAHA.

- For countries and zones with a controlled BSE risk status: at least from the year of official recognition by WOAAH.

For example, for a Member officially recognised as having a negligible BSE risk status in 2016, the starting date would be considered as 8 years prior, which would be 2008.

Q5. Why did WOAAH and the Scientific Commission decide not to undertake evaluations retrospectively to determine the exact starting date?

- A. The Scientific Commission was of the opinion that, should there be a need, Members could determine the exact starting date on their own by using the provisions in the new BSE standards (Chapter 1.8.) as guidance and using their dossiers already submitted to WOAAH (ref. February 2022 report). The reference to the year of official recognition (see Q4) would also provide a basis for all Members.

Q6. When will the dates of official recognition of BSE risk status of countries and zones already having a BSE risk status be published on WOAAH's website?

- A. By August 2023. After WOAAH's General Session of May 2023, WOAAH will send a letter to all Delegates of Members with an official BSE risk status explaining the date proposed to be published on WOAAH's website. Upon confirmation by all Delegates, the dates will be published on the dedicated website.

Q7. Will the adoption of the new BSE standards impact the already recognised official BSE risk status of Members?

- A. Between September 2019 and 2022, the Scientific Commission assessed the potential impact of the revision of the BSE standards of the *Terrestrial Code* on existing statuses, focusing on Members whose risk status was previously recognised based on a negligible entry assessment (with a non-negligible exposure assessment) and concluded that the new BSE standards would not impact the already recognised BSE risk status of countries and zones.

Q8. What happens if my country reports a classical BSE case on the day after the new BSE standards are adopted?

- A. It will be treated according to the new BSE standards (Please refer to the table under Q3 and Annex 1). The official BSE risk status accorded to the country/zone will be maintained for up to 90 days, during which the relevant documentation on the epidemiological investigations carried out providing evidence that there was no breach in the BSE control or surveillance measures should be submitted to WOAAH. The Scientific Commission will assess this information before a decision is made on the maintenance of the official BSE risk status.

In the case that the documentation is submitted after the 90-days, the officially recognised BSE risk status of the country or zone will be suspended. Precise details for this process will become available on WOAAH's website shortly after the General Session of May 2023.

Q9. What should my country do if an atypical BSE case is detected on the day after the new BSE standards are adopted?

- A. The notification to WOAAH of the occurrence of BSE cases would be limited to classical BSE. The information on atypical BSE cases should be provided as part of the annual reconfirmation (and when submitting a dossier for the official recognition of a BSE risk status) in substantiating the effectiveness of the BSE surveillance system.

Annex 1 – Implementation of BSE standards

