Anatomy of a Food Scare

Steve Connor
John Gummer, UK food and agriculture minister, 1990

• “Beef is safe...British beef is ...not a public health risk and can be eaten with complete confidence.”
20 March 1996

• The UK Government acknowledged the possible link between BSE in cows and new variant CJD in humans

• SEAC committee found 10 cases of CJD in people under the age of 42, says it constitutes a new “disease pattern”

• “There remains no scientific proof that bovine spongiform encephalopathy can be transmitted to man by beef, but the committee has concluded that the most likely explanation at present is that those cases are linked to exposure to BSE before the introduction of the specified bovine offal ban in 1989,” Stephen Dorrell, Secretary of State for Health
• Sir Kenneth Calman, chief medical officer, asked whether he will continue to eat beef?

• “I will do so as part of a varied and balanced diet. The new measures and effective enforcement of existing measures will continue to ensure that the likely risk of developing CJD is extremely small.”
Mad Cow Disease in Numbers

• 177 deaths of vCJD in the United Kingdom, and 49 cases in other countries, from October 1996 to 2014

• More than 8,000 cattle diagnosed with BSE. Millions more destroyed, many burnt on huge open-air pyres

• Cost of epidemic: many billions of pounds and irreparable loss of confidence by British consumers
Horse meat in burgers for years

By Steven Swinford and Sam Marsden

SUPERMARKETS might have been selling beef contaminated with horse meat for years because of lax food regulations, experts said yesterday.

The Food Standards Agency was criticised after admitting it had never carried out tests for horse meat on food sold in Britain.

Seven of the leading supermarkets have cleared their shelves of frozen beefburgers after a supplier sold Tesco products which were 25 per cent horse meat.

The supermarket took out newspaper advertisements today to apologise to customers. The discovery was made by Irish authorities, leading to accusations that the Food Standards Agency in Britain had been taking a “light touch”.

The concerns emerged as David Cameron said the discovery of horse meat in burgers was “disgusting” and “completely unacceptable”.

The Food Standards Agency said it had conducted checks in the past because horse meat did not pose a threat to health.

However, Tim Lang, a professor of food policy at City University, London, said: “It could have been going on for years but we wouldn’t know about it because we have never conducted tests.

“For too long we have had light touches, The Food Standards Agency has to be institutionalised into taking a more critical approach. They have to work on the assumption that things could go wrong.”

The scale of horse meat contamination emerged on Tuesday, when the Food Safety Authority of Ireland said it had tested 27 beefburger products.

More than a third had tested positive for horse DNA, including one Tesco Value beefburger in which 29 per cent of the “beef” content was in fact horse meat.

Tesco yesterday blamed suppliers, saying there had either been “gross negligence” or “negligence”.

As the full extent of the scandal emerged, £10 million was wiped off the company’s stock market value.

Aldi, Lidl and Iceland also withdrew frozen beefburgers from their shelves after they were found to be contaminated with horse meat.

They were yesterday joined by Sainsbury’s, Asda and the Co-op.

While they were not found to be selling contaminated food they said they were withdrawing the frozen products from sale as a “precautionary measure”.

The supermarkets were supplied by three meat processing companies, two of which were owned by the ABP Food Group, based in Ireland.

ABP said it was investigating two of its suppliers, believed to be based in the Netherlands and Spain, for selling it contaminated “beef filler”.

The company has withdrawn 10 million frozen beefburgers from the market, and said it had been “shocked” by the discovery of horse meat in its products.

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland said it first identified the contaminated beef in November, but held back from publishing information until it had held further tests.

On Dec 21, it alerted officials at the agriculture ministry in Ireland, and sent the samples off for a final round of tests in Germany. The tests were completed last week and the Food Standards Agency in Britain was told on Monday.

Patrick Wall, the former head of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, said “gross” mistakes have led to horse meat being passed off as beef.

“Horse meat would be a quarter of beef,” Wall said.
Horse meat served in school meals

- UK abattoirs raided as food crisis grows
- Scandal spreads to hospitals, pubs and restaurants
- PM accuses retailers of keeping public in the dark
Dutch trader could be central player in horsemeat scandal

● Middleman 'convicted last year' ● Products withdrawn across Europe

Lluc Harling
Iain Traynor Brussels
Paul Radu Bucharest

A Dutch meat trader has emerged as a key suspect in Europe's sprawling horsemeat scandal. Following allegations that he was convicted last year for passing off horse meat as beef, his determination to sell the goods was revealed.

Speaking exclusively to the Guardian, Joris Fansen, a director of Dutch Trading Ltd, confirmed he bought a consignment of horsemeat from a Romanian tourist and sold it to French food processors. He insisted he had clearly labelled the meat.

But last month Dutch broadcaster NOS reported that Fansen was sentenced in January 2012 for deliberately marketing horsemeat to French processors. He had been caught exporting 42,000 kg of horsemeat from a Dutch factory to France.

Drup Trading Ltd is a Cayman-registered company, run from the Antwerp area of Belgium, and owned by an offshore vehicle based in the British Virgin Islands. Drup spelled backwards is the Dutch word for horse.

Despite his denial, the food trader appears to be at the centre of investigations into how horsemeat entered the European food chain. Drup Trading's name is listed on the meat's export documents from the Netherlands to France.

Drup Trading Ltd delivered meat to Curepe Carter, a Dutch supermarket chain which in turn supplied another Dutch company, Cogent. The Kosters firm found in Britain containing horsemeat came from a Cruise Holding company in Luxembourg.

Spongco confirmed that the meat delivered to its Cavelier frozen plant in southern France had arrived labeled "Beef Originating in SO," the company said. "The meat received was beef meat... This was the order that had been placed. Spongco did not treat it as anything other than beef meat.'

Frozen meat products were, meanwhile, withdrawn from supermarket shelves in the Netherlands, Belgium and France as fears grow that the mislabelling of frozen foods was much more widespread than Plossus imagine.

The Romanians have now pressured Interpol to arrest the man who ordered the meat and the horsemeat producer. The E.U. has now pressured the man who ordered the meat and the horsemeat producer. The E.U. has now pressured the man who ordered the meat and the horsemeat producer.

Council plans to move 750 poor families from London
HORSE MEAT WAS NOT FIT FOR HUMANS
UK turns its nose up at fresh produce in favour of tasty packaged dinners

Survey shows we eat four times as many ready meals

Perishable foods not able to compete, say experts

Sarah Brookes
Health editor

The UK eats almost four times as much packaged food as fresh produce, according to new data.

The packaged food revolution—whereby ready meals and convenience foods are held at least partly to blame for the obesity crisis in the US and Europe—has had a significant impact on consumer eating habits.  The packaged food revolution has been driven by the rise in interest in ready meals and convenience foods, which are often high in calories and low in nutrients.  The rise in interest in ready meals and convenience foods has led to a decrease in the consumption of fresh produce, which is often associated with a healthier diet.

The UK is one of the countries where packaged food consumption has increased the most, with figures showing that the consumption of fresh produce has decreased by over 50% in the last decade.  This trend has been fuelled by the rise in interest in convenience foods, which are often high in calories and low in nutrients.  The rise in interest in convenience foods has led to a decrease in the consumption of fresh produce, which is often associated with a healthier diet.

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Better profits can be made for producers with a small-stage line of food that can be formulated and branded as a commercial commodity.  Fresh and perishable produce have a short shelf life, which means that they have to be kept fresh and constantly monitored to ensure their quality.  The logic of mass production means that the least healthy foods will often be the cheapest, and will be widely promoted in lower-income urban areas.

Last month, a professor of economics who won an award for her work on the obesity epidemic said that high-calorie foods should be sold in plain packaging to make them less attractive.

"Colourful wrapping of high energy foods of course makes you buy more of the stuff, and then you get it in your fridge, it's in front of you every time you open the fridge and ultimately you're going to eat it and eat too much," said Wolfram Schoder, a professor of economics at the University of Cambridge.

The Economist's analysis also reveals that the two countries with the highest levels of obesity are the US and the UK, with over 30% of the population overweight or obese.  The rise in obesity has led to a decrease in the consumption of fresh produce, which is often associated with a healthier diet.

"With the current obesity crisis, a lot of fast food has been commonplace, not only for convenience, but also for reducing the cost and offering customers more for their money.  The rise in obesity is caused by a combination of factors, including the rise in the consumption of fast food, which is often high in calories and low in nutrients.  The rise in obesity has led to a decrease in the consumption of fresh produce, which is often associated with a healthier diet.

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DIABETES RISK IN TAKEAWAYS

Health warning as millions stop cooking at home
Sugar, not fat, is the enemy, says film challenging obesity myths

Acclaimed documentary's science expert calls for health warnings on soft drink cans

by Edward Helmore

New York

First came An Inconvenient Truth. Then Fast Food Nation. Then Blackfish. Each showed the power of critically acclaimed documentaries to alter perceptions about controversial issues ranging from global warming to the treatment of animals in captivity and the behaviour of the food industry giant.

Now comes Fed Up, a film that looks at the global problem of surging human obesity rates and obesity-related diseases. The film, produced by Laurie David, former wife of Nobel Peace Prize creator, and narrated by TV journalist Katie Couric, seeks to challenge decades of misconception and food industry-sponsored misinformation about diet and exercise, good and bad calories, fat genes and lifestyle. When it comes to obesity, fat may not be our friend, but it's not the enemy that sugar is, says the film's scientific consultant, Robert Lustig, a neuroendocrinologist, author and president of the Institute for Responsible Nutrition. It is a view that is gathering support from doctors.

A US government study recently found that 17% of children and young people aged between two and 19 are considered obese. Another predicted that today's American children will lead shorter lives than their parents. Laurie David, who produced the documentary film An Inconvenient Truth, calls that statistic "obstering and tragic.

According to Lustig, however, the obesity industry is in for a shock: "The food industry wants you to focus on these falsehoods that keep it from facing issues of culpability. One, it's about obesity. Two, a calorie is a calorie. Three, it's about personal responsibility."

Obesity was the issue, metabolic illness is the problem. More than half the populations of the US and UK are experiencing effects normally associated with obesity. If more than half the population has a problem, it can't be a behaviour issue; it must be an exposure problem. And that exposure is sugar.

The film claims that fast-food chains and the makers of processed foods have added more sugar to "low-fat" foods to make them more palatable. The sugar surge adds up to a problem not only for low-income groups that are often associated with diet-related health issues, but for all levels of society, say the film producers. The film's executive producer, Laurie David, says: "Early-onset diabetes, a condition associated with exposure to cane sugar and corn syrup, was virtually unknown a few years ago. If current rates continue, one in three Americans will have diabetes by 2050. Obesity is everywhere but is not dangerous in and of itself," says Lustig, who works with the US Department of Health and Education, warning that diabetes causes a "whole lot in terms of social evolution, decreased productivity, medical and pharmaceutical costs, and death."

But while the fight against obesity is championed by First Lady Michelle Obama, efforts to reduce sugar consumption have so far failed. Food producers are going to have to be forced. There's only one group that can force them: the public. The food industry continues to be a threat. We will never solve this without 2050 we will not have healthier food for the next generation. Food producers are going to have to be forced. There's only one group that can force them: the public. The food industry continues to be a threat. We will never solve this without...
Fat and sugar are ‘this generation’s smoking’, warns food watchdog

A FOOD watchdog has warned Scotland’s obesity crisis is our generation’s smoking in terms of causing early deaths.

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has revealed shocking statistics which predict almost one in three Scots will be obese by 2034.

Geoff Ogle, chief executive of FSS, has urged people to get serious about tackling the health problem — in the same way smoking has been tackled.

He said: “If you look at where tobacco was in the 1940s, it was seen as okay to smoke. I don’t think anyone would argue it is cool to smoke now.

“I think there are analogies that show that society’s attitude will change over time.

“The issue is really where is the tipping point which says we have got to do something, and for us, having 50 per cent obesity levels projected in 15 years’ time — if that is not a tipping point, I don’t know what is.”

Tobacco use and obesity share

By Katy Pagan

similar health risks, including increased risk of heart disease, strokes and certain cancers.

Mr Ogle added: “It is a national issue that is clearly now affecting multiple generations.

“We are now facing the prospect where children could possibly be facing a lower life expectancy than their parents.”

The food agency boss said there was a ‘clear contradiction’ between statistics which show that three-quarters of Scots claim they have a healthy diet and others showing two-thirds are overweight or obese.

He said one approach the FSS was now considering was looking at giving more targeted advice for different groups — for example, while the consumption of too much sugar is the main issue in more deprived areas, in more affluent areas the problem is too much fat.

But he said: “You do need changes from industry, education, Government intervention and parents acting differently.

You need all of these things and you have to tackle it on a wide range of fronts.

“You can certainly say there are issues around the amount of sugar in some products — why does a pasta sauce have so much sugar in it?”

“You can educate a parent and they say okay I will cook some spaghetti bolognese. Pasta and mince is good — but then stick a pasta sauce over it not altogether, but said: “I think with these high fat, salt and sugar products we have in effect become a kind of ‘treat society’ — we are treating ourselves far too often and not doing anything in terms of energy to compensate for that treat.”

Debbie Provan, spokesman for the Scottish Dietetic Association, said addressing obesity was similar to tackling smoking in that it was more complex than simply blaming individuals.

She said: “We need to look at everything from education to opportunities to be physically active, how we produce food, how we market it and how we view it.”

Public Health Minister Aileen Campbell said obesity was a complex issue requiring action on many fronts.

She added: “We are investing in physical activity projects, working with the food and drink sector to encourage healthier choices, and running campaigns to promote healthy eating. We continue to work closely with Food Standards Scotland.”

IT’S DAY 158 OF 2016

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THE world’s fastest person on snow is Italian world champion speed skier Ivan Crupi. He cheked 150mph down hill at La Plante, Blanche ski resort in the French Alps in March, accelerating so fast he beat the old line speed of a Formula 1 car getting up to 125mph in 5.5 seconds.

TRENTON OLDFIELD was sentenced to six months in jail for interfering the 150mph Boat Race between Oxford and Cambridge Universities in 2013 by jumping in the Thames. The political campaigner claims his actions were a protest against elitism.

IN 2014, Australian daredevil Dusi Ralstion set a record of 139 bungee jumps in 24 hours.

THERE ARE 208 DAYS LEFT

ATTYING pause in Wimbledon, South London, was sold at auction for £220,000 last December. It is wide, it included a small parking space in front.

AT THE start of World War II, Plymouth had a population of 208,000. By the end of the war, after 602 air raid alerts and 80 bomber attacks, so many people had been evacuated, the population had dropped to 127,000.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

BJORN BORG, 60, The Swedish tennis champion pictured, who won the Wimbledon Men’s Singles title for five consecutive years from 1976 to 1981. In 2006, he planned to auction off his trophies for an expected £300,000, but was persuaded not to by his friend John McEnroe.

Daily Mail, Monday, June 6, 2016

ON THIS DAY

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Is sugar the world’s most popular drug?