

**Welsh Assembly Government consultation on:**  
**Draft Contingency Plan for BSE Being Identified in Sheep**

**Response on behalf of:**

**Organic Centre Wales**  
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After reading the draft document there appear to be no particular concerns with regard to the organic sector in Wales. There are a number of general issues that we wish to highlight however. These are outlined in the following bullet points:

- With reference to item 13 in the document, it should be strongly argued with EU representatives in favour of SEAC recommendations regarding genotype and cut off age. This is with the proviso that human health with in no way be compromised. Following SEAC recommendations is likely to reduce the short to mid term impacts both for the farmer and local authorities of culling and disposing of large numbers of animals if cases of BSE were to be identified.
- With reference to item 20, it is imperative that a diagnostic test for BSE in sheep is developed as soon as possible to reduce the number of uninfected sheep having to be slaughtered as a precautionary measure.
- Welfare impacts associated with any of the on ground implementation of the contingency plan need to be given high priority. The potential compensation measures outlined in item 76 will go some way to assisting farmers in maintaining high welfare objectives for animals.
- With respect to item 58, who will be responsible for the costs of the genotyping programme – will farmers have to pay to have their animals genotyped?
- With respect to item 60, will there be any investigation into the long-term affects of selecting for animals with the resistance gene? Is this gene linked with other that may affect the animal physiologically in some way, for example in their productivity, conformation or ability to resist other diseases? Are there any long-term implications for genetic diversity in UK sheep flocks if selection is based primarily of the resistance gene?
- With reference to item 67 (ii), it potentially very risky to allow non-resistant rams to be kept in isolation to prevent uncontrolled breeding rather than culling or castration, as there is the possibility of animal escape.

- With respect to item 69, it is imperative that sheep keeper data bases are comprehensive and that no sheep are able to slip through the control net.
- With reference to item 76, these are all good suggestions for compensation. It may be worth considering assisting with the costs of genotyping animals as well.