

Eye dissection - using deer eyes

SSERC has recently received a number of enquiries about whether deer eyes can be used for dissection. Although not mentioned specifically in the Code of Practice *Materials of Living Origin* [1] the guidance within the code is also relevant for use with deer eyes. Further more general advice on eye dissection can be found in the SSERC Bulletin articles *Dissecting eyes - hints and tips* [2] and *Dissecting bulls' eyes* [3].

The brain and spinal chord (including eyes) can potentially be a source of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Concern in recent years has centred particularly on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) which is linked to new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (nvCJD), a human form of TSE. Legislation is designed to prevent such materials entering both the human and animal food chain.

Deer are susceptible to a TSE known as chronic wasting disease (CWD). Although endemic in some parts of the USA, there is no evidence of CWD (or other TSEs) in deer in the UK. Deer keepers in the UK are legally obliged to report any suspected cases of TSE [4]. Laboratory and epidemiological studies in the USA [5] have not demonstrated a causal link between CWD and nvCJD or TSEs in other species.

Consequently teachers can be confident that the advice and guidance in *Materials of Living Origin* forms a suitable and sufficient basis on which to base control measures to control the low level of risk associated with deer eyes. That is the eyes should be sourced from animals fit for human consumption and the guidance in the Code of Practice followed with respect to their dissection and disposal. This demonstrates the robust nature of SSERC's approach to sensible and proportionate risk assessment in that the control measures in the Code of Practice can be reviewed and adopted for a new situation as part of ongoing risk assessment. It is worth emphasising that under the guidance provided (paragraph 3.5) in the Code of Practice [1] no native, wild birds or mammals living or dead (including road kill), may be brought into school.



References

- [1] *Materials of Living Origin* (2012), www.sserc.org.uk
- [2] *Dissecting eyes - hints and tips* (2012) *SSERC Bulletin*, 241, 4-7.
- [3] *Dissecting bulls' eyes* (2012) *SSERC Bulletin*, 240, 11
- [4] *Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) in Deer - Advisory Notes for Farmers* (2010), www.defra.gov.uk
- [5] Ermias D. Belay, Ryan A. Maddox, Elizabeth S. Williams, Michael W. Miller, Pierluigi Gambetti, and Lawrence B. Schonberger (2004), *Chronic Wasting Disease and Potential Transmission to Humans*, *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 10, No. 6.