Mad Cow Disease (BSE) Essay, Research Paper

The social issue that recently dominated Great Britain has been the ?mad Cow Disease? scare. ?Mad Cow Disease? is a Bovine infection that is not transmittable to humans.

The ?Mad Cow Disease? is formally known as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). Scientists think BSE was spread by feeding the cattle food with parts of sheep in it who had a related disease, Scrapie. BSE is believed to be caused by an infected protein in the cow?s brain. This became a social issue because of a coincidence involving Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD). CJD is a rare neuro logical disorder that only affects one in every million people worldwide. ?Last year the British government issued a report suggesting that BSE could be transmissible to humans, who would then develop CJD.? (ref. 1) ?The British government recently acknowledged that Mad Cow Disease might possibly cause CJD.? (Ref. 2) This suspicion has not yet been proven. Despite this lack of proof, ?The ensuing media frenzy led to the greatest animal slaughter in history, crippling the British beef industry, further calling into question

the safety of the food supply throughout the world.? (Ref. 1)

Even though there is scientific evidence available that says we can be sure that Mad Cow Disease poses no threat the humans, the media makes people believe that this is false. The real victims from the BSE scare weren?t the 16 believed to have died from the ?related? CJD, but rather the related industries and the public who have no reason to be scared. The cattle industry puts much of the blame on the British press because some headlines have caused emotional stirs. Ranchers have said they can hardly sell cattle or calves. For example, one slaughter house owner had to tell him employees that he had to put then on a three day week–slaughtering only pigs and sheep. The government also caused over-reactions because they mishandled the information by assuming BSE tied into CJD. Many butchers have been forced to slash down prices dramatically. One butcher?s black board read ?YOU must be MAD to miss this.? Obviously, a light hearted sales pitch to attempt to reel shoppers to buy beef once again. The assumptions that BSE cause CJD have even reached America. Just ask your ?All American? talk show host Oprah Winfrey, who is now being faced with a $10 million law suit for voicing her opinion on air about the outbreak.

Even though there is evidence that proves there is nothing BSE can do to harm someone, many people will still avoid beef products and cause the beef industry to lose millions. And, after all, mass hysteria over imagined fears is its own form of madness.