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New BSE scare in Britain

THE Irish beef industry, North and South, was caught up in another major UK scare on BSE this week. Yesterday afternoon, UK health secretary Stephen Dorrell confirmed that ten cases of a hitherto unidentified strain of CJD had been confirmed in people under 42 years of age in the UK over the past two years. He said that there was no scientific proof that BSE was transmitted to humans but it was most likely that there was some exposure to infected animals before 1989 when the meat and bonemeal ban was introduced.

Mr Dorrell said that the current scientific advice was that there should be no change in eating habits either in relation to beef or milk, and the country's chief medical officer Sir Kenneth Calmon had indicated that he intended to continue to eat beef as part of "varied and balanced diet". A national advertising campaign is being launched in Britain, aimed at reassuring people that eating beef is not dangerous, while at home IFA President John Donnelly has called for a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to the latest scare by An Bord Bia.

This week, a number of Northern factories had stopped quoting, pending developments, while in the south supplies were being scaled down to some UK supermarket outlets in anticipation of a difficult period of trading.