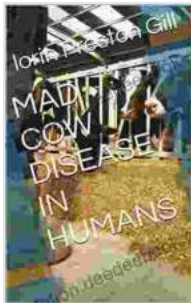


# Mad Cow Disease: A Comprehensive Guide to Its Impact on Humans



## MAD COW DISEASE IN HUMANS by Riley Black

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Mad cow disease, also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is a fatal neurodegenerative disease that affects cattle. It is caused by a type of misfolded protein called a prion. Prions are infectious agents that can cause abnormal folding of other proteins, leading to the development of amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles in the brain. These plaques and tangles disrupt normal brain function and eventually lead to death.

BSE was first identified in the United Kingdom in 1986. Since then, it has been reported in over 30 countries worldwide. The majority of cases have occurred in cattle, but there have also been a small number of cases in humans. The human form of the disease is known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD).

## **Symptoms of Mad Cow Disease in Humans**

The symptoms of vCJD are similar to those of other forms of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. They include:

- Progressive dementia
- Memory loss
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Personality changes
- Behavioral problems
- Muscle weakness
- Clumsiness
- Speech problems
- Difficulty swallowing
- Vision problems
- Seizures
- Coma

The symptoms of vCJD typically develop over a period of months to years. The average survival time after diagnosis is about 13 months.

## **Diagnosis of Mad Cow Disease in Humans**

The diagnosis of vCJD is based on a combination of clinical symptoms, medical history, and laboratory tests. The following tests may be used to

help diagnose vCJD:

- **Electroencephalography (EEG):** An EEG measures the electrical activity of the brain. In vCJD, an EEG may show characteristic patterns of brain activity.
- **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI):** An MRI scan can create detailed images of the brain. In vCJD, an MRI may show areas of damage to the brain.
- **Biopsy:** A biopsy involves removing a small sample of brain tissue for examination under a microscope. In vCJD, a biopsy can show the characteristic amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles.

The definitive diagnosis of vCJD can only be made after death through an autopsy.

## **Treatment of Mad Cow Disease in Humans**

There is no cure for vCJD. Treatment is focused on managing the symptoms and providing supportive care. This may include:

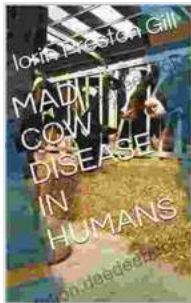
- **Medications:** Medications can be used to help manage the symptoms of vCJD, such as pain, seizures, and anxiety.
- **Nutritional support:** Nutritional support may be necessary to help maintain the patient's weight and strength.
- **Palliative care:** Palliative care focuses on providing comfort and support to the patient and their family.

## **Prevention of Mad Cow Disease in Humans**

The most effective way to prevent vCJD is to avoid eating beef products from cattle that are infected with BSE. The following measures can help to reduce the risk of exposure to BSE:

- **Avoid eating beef from countries where BSE is known to occur.**
- **Choose beef from cattle that have been tested for BSE.**
- **Cook beef thoroughly.**
- **Avoid eating raw or undercooked beef.**

It is also important to note that vCJD is not spread through casual contact with an infected person. However, it is possible to transmit vCJD through blood transfusions or organ transplants. People who are at high risk of exposure to vCJD, such as healthcare workers and blood transfusion recipients, should be tested for



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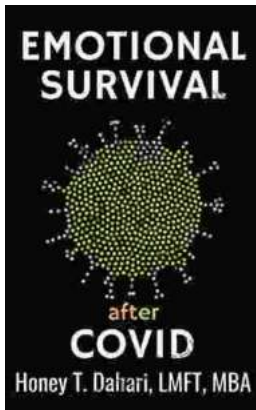
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