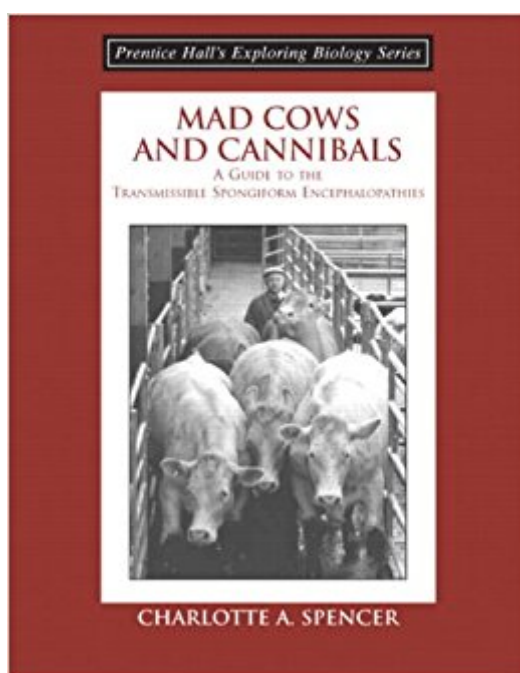


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Mad Cows And Cannibals, A Guide To The Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (Booklet)



Synopsis

Mad Cows and Cannibals guides readers through the complex world of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) – bizarre, degenerative brain diseases that affect both animals and humans. In clear and accessible language, it provides basic explanations of the science and issues surrounding Mad Cow Disease and related conditions. It begins with stories of ritualistic cannibalism in the highlands of New Guinea, and leads to the modern agricultural feeding practices that triggered the Mad Cow Disease epidemic in Great Britain, and to recent outbreaks of Chronic Wasting Disease in North America. It explains the biology of TSEs and explores how political and social actions can contribute to their spread, answering important questions about how TSEs affect the safety of our food supply, blood supply, and medical procedures. This book will be of interest to the general public and the media, as it provides basic explanations of the science and issues surrounding TSEs. Also useful as a reference work for those in health care, medical-legal professions, and genetics industry.

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Mad Cows and Cannibals guides the reader through the complex world of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) — bizarre, degenerative brain diseases that afflict both animals and humans. The journey leads us from ritualistic cannibalism in the highlands of New Guinea. through the modern agricultural feeding practices that triggered the Mad Cow Disease epidemic in Great Britain, to the recent outbreak of chronic wasting disease in North America. In clear and accessible

language, *Mad Cows and Cannibals* explains the biology of TSEs and explores how political and social actions can contribute to their spread. It also answers questions about how TSEs affect the safety of our food supply, blood supply, and medical procedures. A comprehensive list of web and print resources points the way for continued exploration of this important and controversial topic.

The transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) may be the most bizarre and mysterious diseases in nature. They are unlike any other infectious diseases, are not caused by viruses or bacteria, and they challenge the accepted dogmas of molecular biology. These fatal neurodegenerative diseases are terrifying, appear to strike in a random manner, and have no cure. Most scientists now accept the idea that TSEs are caused by rogue protein molecules that convert normal proteins into abnormal ones; however, this concept is still controversial. In the mid-1990s, the spread of Mad Cow Disease to humans triggered panic in Europe, crippled Britain's beef industry, and helped topple the Conservative government in the United Kingdom. In 2003, the discovery of a case of Mad Cow Disease in a single cow in Alberta, Canada led to bans on the export of Canadian beef, and raised questions about the extent of Mad Cow Disease in North America. In addition, concerns about the safety of the blood supply, vaccines, and surgical instruments keep Mad Cow Disease in the news around the world. In North America, an epidemic of chronic wasting disease currently threatens wild and domesticated deer and elk populations and has depressed some economies that rely on hunting. So little is known about TSEs that reliable screening tests and effective treatments still do not exist. To comprehend the threat that TSEs pose to human health and to assess whether regulatory measures are sufficient to control their spread, we need to understand as much as possible about these diseases. The goals of this booklet are: to describe the nature of TSEs; their biology, history, and epidemiology; to address a number of specific questions about TSEs and human health with an emphasis on two recently emerged diseases; Mad Cow Disease and Chronic Wasting Disease; to pose some of the ethical questions that surround TSEs; to provide resources for further study. We have attempted to present the most current and accurate information possible, derived primarily from scientific literature, the media, and government sources. As research is progressing rapidly and TSE epidemics are changing daily, readers are encouraged to refer to scientific journals and the Web sites listed in the References and Resources section for the next developments.

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