

# Theory: Mad cow from human remains

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Two British researchers have a theory mad cow disease might have been transmitted via importation of bone meal contaminated by human remains.

Alan Colchester of the University of Kent, Canterbury and his daughter, Nancy, a veterinary medicine specialist at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, suggest the Hindu funeral practice of partially cremated bodies cast into the Ganges, only to be scavenged and recycled, led to contamination in India of animal bone meal, the Times of London reported Friday.

Some of the people may have died of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease vCJD in India, and if so, bone meal contaminated with vCJD could have entered the animal food chain in Britain.

The contaminated animal meal might have caused the outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly known as mad cow disease, in cattle, which was then transferred to people as vCJD, the human equivalent of BSE.

The study, published in the Lancet, said evidence is circumstantial, but the theory was strong enough to justify further research, according to the authors.

Two Indian Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease experts said even if human waste contaminated exported bone meal, the dilution would have been too enormous.

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