stock position is reviewed every time a transaction occurs. The result had been proved for the special case where a Poisson process governs demand. My contribution, drawing on the theory of semi-Markov chains, was to generalise this result to the case of an arbitrary distribution for inter-times.

To summarise, it was demonstrated in my paper that the stock position has a uniform steady state distribution in a perpetual review (Q, R) system when

- (a) transaction sizes have a common arbitrary probability distribution

- (b) the times between transactions have a common arbitrary probability distribution.

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References

- 1 Lau H-L A and Lau H-S (2000). On Snyder's proof that the inventory position is uniformly distributed in some (Q, R) systems. *J Opl Res Soc* **51**: 889
- 2 Snyder RD (1980). The safety stock syndrome. *J Opl Res Soc* **31**: 833–837.
- 3 Hadley, G and Whitin T (1963). *Analysis of Inventory Systems*, Prentice-Hall: New Jersey.

The diet problem—or should it be the health problem?

I have been worried for some years that supposedly OR-based approaches may have contributed, albeit inadvertently, to the BSE crisis. The paper¹ in the September 1999 issue of JORS by Polimeno *et al* has done nothing to allay my fears on this.

There seems to be little in the formulations which has the well-being of either the consumer or the cows at heart. Surely, in the light of the BSE crisis, we must at last abandon the notion of a diet problem about minimising cost or 'maximising the value of milk over costs' whether for beef or milk production.

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References

- 1 Polimeno F *et al.* (1999). Integrating the use of linear and dynamic programming methods for dairy cow diet formulation. *J Opl Res Soc* **50**: 931–942.

Editors Note: Polimeno *et al* have promised a response to this Viewpoint but their reply is still awaited. The comments made might also apply to other papers and research in this field.