

**A call for consistency in the criteria used to reject sheep carcasses affected with Cysticercus Ovis – an inspectors response.**

I for one share Mariusz's frustration with the situation outlined in his article, indeed, it has been a concern of mine for a very long time. I know Mariusz well enough to know his thinking on this matter and he knows the system and criteria that I use in my day to day inspection duties, and we are both in agreement that it is a fair and proportional method that we have put in place. We are not stating that it is correct or incorrect, but it has been accepted by the FBO's where this system has been used and I would like to describe this system to you, in order to try and stimulate debate that might hopefully lead to an inspectorate standard that could be accepted industry wide.

The whole crux of the system that I use is based around the one simple main criterion;

If I should find lesions of Cysticercus Ovis in **three or more different anatomical sites**, I deem the condition to be generalised and reject the carcass and offals accordingly. I.e. one or more lesions in the heart would count as one anatomical site. Likewise, one or more lesions in the right/left diaphragm, right/left flanks would only count as one anatomical site etc. In my experience, this system does not lead to what might be construed as an over rejection of affected carcasses but, when such carcasses are slashed and stained I would estimate that 60 – 70 % show further lesions in deep seated muscles (it should be noted that short of dicing the carcass meat to half inch cubes, some lesions will always remain undetected).

I also have put in place a system of further inspection (a set routine if you will) that I adopt when lesions are encountered;

- a) If the heart is not showing visible lesions on the epicardium, I will incise the heart in exactly the same way as in beef inspection, to expose both ventricles and to incise through the intraventricular septum, and I will palpate the heart skirt that remains on the red offals.
- b) I will palpate the diaphragms on either side.
- c) I will make one clean incision through the adductor muscle down to the aitch bone (a cut that will be one of the first made by the butcher) to expose the muscle for closer examination.
- d) I will free the psoas muscles from the renal fats, leaving the fats hanging in situ (thus not removing saleable weight from the carcass) and examine those muscles.
- e) I will free the neck from extraneous tissues, again leaving the tissues in situ to more closely examine the muscles of the neck.
- f) I will insert the tip of the knife into the "pockets" of the shoulders (these incisions will close up and be unnoticeable when the carcass is subsequently banded and allowed to set) in order to then insert a digit and palpate the triceps on either side.
- g) With freshly washed hands (non bloodied gloves) I will palpate the carcass.

As stated at the top, we are not claiming this method to be wholly "correct" but both Mariusz and I would claim that is a system that works, without making any extraneous incisions and without devaluing the carcass in any way, and yet it still adequately protects the consumer's interest.

### No Pus, No Parasites

I believe that British lamb has a well deserved reputation throughout the World for being some of the finest meat available, and I am proud to be able to play some small role in the preservation of that reputation. Some quarters would have you believe that such conditions (parasitic lesions, abscesses, tumours etc) are of no more importance than to be merely "quality issues". The fact that C. Ovis is not zoonotic is the reason that they will cite in this instance but I would contend that, if the consumer should start biting down on a calcified lesion of C.Ovis, or start finding lesions as they are carving their lovingly prepared Sunday roast, that this well earned reputation could be very quickly diminished. Therefore, I would advocate that such conditions stay well within the remit of competent, independent meat hygiene inspectors and let's all work together to uphold that reputation. After all, if consumer confidence is maintained or even enhanced, we all stand to benefit!!!

Surely that it is what we should be aiming for and we recommend the system to you and would welcome further comment.

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