

General Secretary's Report



Hello to you all.

The Association of Meat Inspectors Trust held their 50th Seminar over the weekend of 11th and 12th September at Adams University, Shropshire. And a very successful event it was too!

The Mayor of Telford and Wrekin, Mr. Leon Murray opened the Seminar exhibition at 5pm and then joined us for dinner.

The exhibition hall was dominated as usual by the magnificent display put up by WR Wright and Sons, of Liverpool. Wrights have supported the AMI for many years, and have for the last few years brought the entire team along to the event, they enjoy attending that much.

Other stands were perhaps of lesser stature, but of no lesser import and included those from the Humane Slaughter Association, the Royal Society for Protection of Health, and the Association itself. All of the exhibitors have been long standing supporters of the AMI and the gratitude of the Trust has been and continues to be extended to all of the good people involved with these organisations.

After dinner on the Friday night, the first of the sessions was chaired by the President of the AMI, Archie Anderson who introduced the first speaker of the weekend, Catherine Brown CEO of the Food Standards Agency. Catherine reiterated her support for MHI's and the importance of the work that they do. She did go on to state her belief that the role could well change in the years to come but that at this point in time, she couldn't predict exactly how that change might manifest itself.

Catherine was followed by another stalwart of the Association, Angus Lowden MBE, who informed the Seminar of the early days of the Association. Ron Spellman then brought us up to the present day and Stephane Touzet. General Secretary of the European Working Community for Food Inspection and Consumer Protection (EWFC) outlined their role and the AMI position within that organisation.

With the Friday night sessions completed, delegates then retired to the bar where new acquaintances were made and old ones renewed.

On the Saturday morning, sessions resumed with a presentation from John Lawrence, Operational Head Veterinarian for the FSA, who talked us through the FSA's progress to enhanced monitoring of animal welfare at slaughter. He was followed by Jade Spence, Technical Officer with the Humane Slaughter Association who gave us an insight in to new and emerging methods of stunning.

Ray Ede, Lead Dairy Hygiene Inspector, in a new departure for the AMI, gave a presentation that wasn't directly about meat inspection or even an associated topic, but

which was more about the 'diversification' roles that an increasing number of MHI's are taking on. Ray gave an insight into the work of dairy hygiene inspectors, the tools that they use and the methods of enforcement open to them.

This was a 'trial' run to ascertain just how well this sort of subject would be received and, whether or not it was down to the quality of the presentation, the subject matter or both, it was very well received and similar presentations will be included in future seminars.

After lunch, (the lamb tagine was something special!!!) Eleni Michalopalou, Veterinary advisor to the Association, presented the second instalment of the 'History of Meat Inspection', following on from part one delivered last year.

Alex Gonzales, a Field Veterinary Leader with the FSA then presented a quiz on game inspection in a very unique and novel way that permitted cheating, use of mobile phones, copying your neighbour's answers and conferring between groups. And many of us still got the answers wrong, which just goes to prove that there is always room to enhance your knowledge. I will now forever remember that a buffalo at slaughter is covered by the domestic bovine regulations!!!

Alex's presentation certainly set the delegates 'abuzz' and the final speaker of the day had to follow a very light hearted subject with a very weighty matter, and he had my sympathies for that at the outset.

However, that final speaker was John Blackwell, President of the British Veterinary Association, and he gave us the exact point of view of the BVA with regards to non-stun slaughter as oppose to stunned slaughter.

This can prove to be an emotional subject but John's presentation sought to avoid the emotive and he provided a very balanced, reasoned train of thought as to why the BVA had taken the stance it had.

It is always the intention of the AMI trust to send delegates to supper still talking about the subjects they have heard about that day, and once again, this was achieved.

Although we write and thank our speakers individually, I would again like to publically thank our speakers for the quality of their presentations and for taking the time to deliver them at our Seminar.

After the formal dinner on the Saturday evening, we were lucky enough to be entertained by a guest speaker, Mr. Charlie Mason, Technical Director for the HSA.

He had his entire audience roaring with laughter for a good twenty minutes before the President of the AMI took to the microphone to take the oaths of those wishing to subscribe to the professional register, summarise and close the seminar. Before he did so, Archie was also required to present the Robin Irish award.

This awarded is made (not necessarily every year) to someone who has made an outstanding contribution to meat inspection or who has provided long or outstanding service to the Association. This year's recipient, Robert Huey, a former veterinary advisor to the AMI, qualified on all counts. Unfortunately, Robert was unable to attend this year's event and Charlie Mason (himself a previous recipient) accepted the award on Roberts's behalf.

Feedback from delegates was, I am delighted to be able say, one hundred percent positive. There were a lot of seminar 'first timers' at this year's event and the Trustees made a point of circulating in the bar on Saturday evening to welcome these people personally. In every instance, delegates were extremely positive and stated their intention to attend

again in the future. Encouragingly, they also stated that they would recommend attendance to their colleagues.

The stalwarts of the Association were unanimous in that this seminar had been up alongside the very best of the seminars that they could remember, which made the current Trustees smile rather a lot, as they are well aware of the standards they have been set by their predecessors.

AMI Trust met again on the Sunday morning to start the wheels in motion for next year's event. It really is that involved.

However, Seminar is run for the good people involved in meat inspection and it would not work without the full, active and sometimes vociferous participation of the delegates.

I say this every year, but I feel it is worth repeating; Seminar is your event, and if you feel that there is a subject matter that should be included that has not been covered, or if you think it would be of particular interest, please drop me a line and I will take the matter to Trust for further consideration.

All in all, the Association's 50th Seminar was a huge success, and I know I speak for all the Trustees and seminar team when I state that we thoroughly enjoyed meeting everyone there, be that old hands or seminar virgins.

We will do it all again next year, slightly later into September but at the same venue.

2016 seminar will be held over the weekend of 16th – 17th September, and I sincerely hope to be able to meet many of you there.

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Ian Robinson