

General Secretary's Report



Seminar

More good news to start this report. The Association's 44th Annual Seminar was held over the weekend of 4th-6th September at the University of Nottingham, and proved to be a great success. By necessity, this was a smaller event than in previous years, and I am happy to report that the event was ever so slightly over subscribed and the feedback that I have received both during and after the event has been extremely positive, with many delegates enquiring after next year's Seminar already. There was a higher proportion of working meat inspectors at this event, and it was good to see delegates attending from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well of those of us that are rather more local.

The speakers were excellent, and my particular thanks go to Frances Moreno, Jade Spence, Dr. Serge Losch, Eric Crutcher, Prof. Anthony Fooks and Pauline Kidner, for the time and trouble taken in putting together their presentations. Their subjects were avian/swine flu, on farm culling of poultry, microbiological lab results, residue in meat sampling, rabies and wildlife rescue respectively, with an informal quiz on pathology compiled by Dr Hal Thompson held on the Friday night.

There was the old "buzz" back to this event and for those of you not able to attend this year, most of the presentations will be available in this and future editions of the Hygienist. Also available on the Association website is a gallery of photographs. There will also be another Seminar held next year and the Trustees will meeting soon to determine the theme and desired subject matters for that event.

Robin Irish Award

Congratulations go out to Ron Spellman on his being awarded the Robin Irish Award, presented each year to one person who has either given years of service to the Association or who has contributed greatly in one form or another. I think it is fair to say that Ron qualifies on both counts. A member for many years Ron was also one of the fundamental voices in the battle to alter the regulations that came into force at the start of 2006. Ron would be the first to say that now is not the time to drop our guard and that there are new battles on the horizon. Well done Ron, and I look forward to working with you for some time to come

Association Library

At the last meeting of council it was decided that the Association video library should be updated and transferred to DVD format in its entirety. Stephen Holden, the South East divisional secretary will be undertaking this work, and when this is done, an index of all the titles held will be posted on the Association website. It is hoped that once the master copies are made, these titles will be made available to members, upon application, at a

minimal price. It has been noted that some of these titles will now be outdated due to changes in practice/legislation etc. but it was felt that all the history available should be preserved as a matter of posterity.

AMI/UNISON “affiliation”

There have been some members voicing their concern about the word “affiliation” in relation to the Association’s working with UNISON, and their concerns that although the AMI is NOT a union, it might be construed that way if this term continues to be used. Also in this issue is a letter (in its entirety, and with his permission) that I received from Mick Fussey MBE. I took this letter to council as requested, and enquired after the historic reasons for this wording and asked council to think about how we could address these concerns. It was explained that steps have been taken in the past to prevent the Association going down the route of unionisation, and that this had been largely in response to a letter from Jim Fleming a number of years ago. It would be timely at this point however, to remind all members that had it not been for the co-operation between our two organisations in working together to influence the final 2006 regulations (H1, H2, H3), then it is highly likely that meat inspection would have been handed to industry already. I believe that every member continues to recognise the advantages of a centrally organised (and preferably funded), independent system of meat inspection and appreciates just how important the pressure exerted proved to be.

To this end, it is imperative that where our causes overlap, that we continue to offer up a united front and oppose those moves that will lead to a lowering of standards, removal of independence and the subsequent diminution of impartiality.

It was decided that the wording should be changed from “affiliation” to “sharing common areas of interest”, which should accurately reflect the working relationship that exists between us.

Letters

The letter published in the last edition of Hygienist from John Chadwick has provoked some debate and this edition carries a response from Steve McGrath, CEO of the Meat Hygiene Service. To answer those people who question the wisdom of printing such letters, the Association is happy to provoke debate in an open and transparent way. It is made clear in every edition of Hygienist that the views of contributors are not necessarily the views of the AMI, and if members are keen to air their own views, then the editor would be only too happy to resurrect the letters page to facilitate this.

I was hoping that the piece on HACCP in abattoirs in my last report would provoke some debate, but in all honesty, talking to members at seminar and fellow meat hygiene inspectors in plant, I have yet to hear from anybody who disagrees with my points.

Perhaps some of the policy makers in the MHS/FSA would care to make comment, or if they completely agree with me, perhaps they could take these points forward and implement them in plant?

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Ian Robinson