

## **Professional Recognition – Q & A's**

### **1) What is a non-statutory Register?**

*The new Register will be known as a non-statutory Register because there is not the current requirement for it in legislation that there is for other professionals, such as veterinary surgeons, doctors and human nurses. Meat Hygiene Inspectors themselves, by signing up to the new Register, will give the RCVS authority to regulate their practice (professional work) in accordance with the MHI Guide to Professional Conduct. In other words, there will be a contract between the RCVS, to maintain the Register, and Meat Hygiene Inspectors, to adhere to their Guide to Professional Conduct.*

### **2) What will the new Register look like?**

*The Association of Meat Inspectors will continue to maintain a List of Meat Hygiene Inspectors on behalf of the RCVS. However, from 2013 the List will be divided into two sections. These will be the new non-statutory Register and the current (unregulated) List.*

*We will distinguish each part of the published List so that it will be very clear to employers and the public that Registered MHIs are subject to professional regulation and those electing to remain on the unregulated List are not. We will also distinguish between Registered MHIs and those remaining on the unregulated List by providing annual registration cards.*

### **3) Who will join the new Register?**

*All MHIs who qualified on, or after, 1 January 2012, will automatically transfer to the new Register and the old MHI List of MHI Members will close to new entrants. If you first listed as a Meat Hygiene Inspector before 1 January 2012, you will be able to transfer voluntarily to the new Register but may also elect to stay on the unregulated List. The annual retention fee will remain the same for both the new Register and the List.*

### **4) Will MHIs who do not register be able to practise?**

*Yes. MHIs who elect to stay on the unregulated List will still be entitled to practise and carry out those duties described in EC Regulation 854/2004. However, their employers will have no assurances of their professional conduct or maintenance of CPD.*

*The unregulated List has to be maintained for MHIs who first Listed before January 2012 and do not wish to be regulated. However, it will shrink over time as MHIs on this part of the RCVS List either retire or elect to be regulated.*

### **5) What will non-statutory regulation mean?**

*For Meat Hygiene Inspectors subject to non-statutory regulation, the current List will become a Register. In order to become a Registered Meat Hygiene Inspector it will be necessary to have the same qualifications as are required for admission to the List. In addition, however, Registered Meat Hygiene Inspectors will have their professional conduct regulated. There will be a Guide to Professional Conduct for Meat Hygiene Inspectors and complaints will be investigated and, where necessary, disciplinary proceedings will be brought. MHIs will also be required to maintain their professional development in accordance with requirements set out by the Association of Meat Inspectors Council.*

*Registered Meat Hygiene Inspectors may be suspended or removed from the Register if they have been found guilty of serious professional misconduct or if they have a criminal conviction which renders them unfit to practise. A Registered Meat Hygiene Inspector might also be removed from the Register if their name had been fraudulently entered in the Register, or for non-payment of fees. Any Meat Hygiene Inspector whose name is suspended or removed from the Register will not be able to carry out Official Auxiliary duties. A new disciplinary committee for Registered Meat Hygiene Inspectors will decide whether or not a Registered Authorised Meat Hygiene Inspector should be suspended or removed from the Register.*

*Any Meat Hygiene Inspector who has been removed from the Register, for whatever reason, but wishes to return to it may have to comply with requirements for retraining.*

## **6) What will members be known as? Will M.A.M.I. continue in use or is this likely to change?**

*Meat Hygiene Inspectors on the Register will be entitled to be called Registered Meat Hygiene Inspectors (or other such name as is chosen by members) and put the letters after their names.*

*At this current moment in time, this is still being discussed and suggestions from members are most welcome. Most professions take a great deal of pride from the letters that they are entitled to use after their name and our profession should be no different. Suggestions thus far include; Registered Meat Hygiene Inspector –RMHI, Registered Member of the Association of Meat Inspectors – RMAMI.*

*Any further suggestions will be taken forward to council for discussion and if there is one stand out choice then that is what is likely to be adopted. Failing that, I would suggest that the suitable options are put out for comment by members and opinion gathered. In either case, the final choice would be made by a vote at AGM.*

## **7) Will these measures be effective straight away?**

*No, not immediately. The Register will be set up from 1 January 2013, but will exist in “shadow” form for the first two years. This means that all the new regulatory requirements will be in place but most will be advisory to begin with. In other words, MHI's will be expected to adhere to the CPD requirements and the Guide to Professional Conduct but will not be subject to disciplinary action if they transgress in the early days of the new Register.*

*This approach is designed to allow time for education and familiarisation with the new arrangements without fear of punitive action if MHI's misunderstand or make mistakes. The RCVS will concentrate on education during this period, working with the Association of Meat Inspectors and other professional associations and colleges to ensure that everyone is fully prepared for the Register to become fully operational.*

*During the introductory period, the RCVS will also monitor several aspects of the new scheme. Most importantly, we shall monitor the uptake of the CPD requirements and the number and nature of any complaints made to the RCVS about MHI's. This will help us to adapt the CPD guidance if necessary and to determine the volume and likely cost of future disciplinary processes.*

*From 1 January 2013 MHI's on the Register will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.*

## **8) Would the RCVS provide qualification training?**

*It would fall to the “educational” bodies such as the colleges and Universities to provide qualification training, having drawn up syllabuses that encompass all the criteria set down by the awarding bodies such as the RSPH. It is to be hoped that the AMI would get involved with the practical aspect of the training, and the assessment. Who better to assess trainee MHI's than practicing, professionally*

registered MHI's? This assessment, if laid down at the outset, could then be applied to persons from other EU states who wish to practice meat inspection in the UK on the strength of a veterinary qualification rather than a meat inspection qualification. This should raise standards to an acceptable level across the board.

**9) What benefit would RCVS get from the AMI achieving PR?**

*In the first instance, with all the "veterinary providers" being encompassed by the reviewed veterinary legislation, the RCVS should gain a "template" utilised with the AMI that could be carried across and utilised in the same way with other veterinary groups.*

**10) How much is membership likely to cost?**

Initially there will be no change to the membership fee. However, it is likely to increase when membership of the Register becomes mandatory. That said, it would be unreasonable not to be in line with other professional bodies of an equivalent stature.

**11) How much will be paid to RCVS?**

*It is not possible at this stage to give exact figures, but it has been suggested that a pro rata percentage, as yet to be decided, would be paid to RCVS for the services that they would provide, such as the legal aspect, technical advice, their role in any disciplinary committees etc.*

**12) Where does it leave an individual with regards to membership?**

*It is envisaged that ultimately, any individual wishing to practice meat inspection in the UK would have to be registered (and therefore be a member) to do so. This would not only protect the general public from that individual in the case of malpractice (which is the case with any professional body), but also that the individual would gain enhanced status, credibility, reputation and respect. E.g. CORGI registered gas engineers.*

**13) What are the implications from going down this route?**

*MHI's would have to be registered and therefore a member, thus agreeing to abide by a set code of conduct and subject to a disciplinary hearing if that code is transgressed. Such a hearing would be made up of people from the RCVS, the AMI, the competent authority (AMI?) and members of the general public. Where the real crux lies is that such a panel sitting at these hearings would, potentially, be able to remove an individual's ability to earn a living, should that individual have transgressed the code of conduct to such a degree that it was felt to be necessary to remove them from the register.*

*This is not quite as alarming as it might at first sound as the same scenario exists at present, with MHI's employed by the FSA being subject to disciplinary proceedings in the light of certain transgressions "on the job" as well as having to abide by the civil service code.*

**14) Would FBO's be able to train and register their own MHI's and then have them working in their own plants? Could FBO's form their own contracting agencies/veterinary providers and then employ those MHI's in their own plants?**

*It is a fundamental principle of the Association that meat inspection remains independent of industry and we can see no reason that would change this way of thinking.*

**15) Could a registered individual work outside a competent authority?**

Yes.

**16) Could this allow a registered individual to work throughout the EU?**

*This is a different issue, requiring mutual recognition of qualifications, something which the EU Commission wishes to promote. It is our aim that any individual registered as a member of the AMI would carry an enhanced kudos such that this would be additionally welcomed in all member states.*

**17) What will the CPD requirements be?**

*In brief, MHIs will be required to undertake a minimum of six days (45 hours) over a three-year period, i.e. an average of two days per year.*

*The RCVS deems effective CPD to be any planned activity that leads to useful learning of direct relevance to your area of practice, and which contributes positively to the way that you work. It does not have to be a formal course or study day; valuable CPD can also be gained through independent projects and research. The important thing will be to record this and demonstrate how your MHI practice has benefited.*

*The details of the CPD framework will be provided through the pages of the Meat Hygienist. While two days a year may not sound much, the RCVS has set this level because it believes it to be achievable by every MHI, whether junior or experienced, full- or part-time. We recognise that many MHIs undertake a much greater level of CPD.*

**18) Would e-learning count as CPD?**

*Any extra learning/reading/ event that enables an individual to be more effective at their job could be classed as CPD.*

**19) Returning to work after a break?**

*From 2013-14, MHI's returning to work after a break of five years or more will have a choice. They may either return to the unregulated List or join the new Register. Those electing to join the new Register will be required to demonstrate competence.*

**20) Who will pay for Registration and CPD?**

*As now, it will be an MHI's responsibility to ensure that his/her registration and annual retention fees are paid. There will be a similar personal responsibility to ensure that the requirements for CPD are addressed.*

*However, the majority of employers currently fund, either fully or in part, the registration and retention fees for their practice staff and also invest in their CPD. The requirements of the new regulations will not significantly add to these existing costs.*

**21) Could this lead to EU style food inspectors rather than just MHI's?**

*This would require additional training to raise the level of qualification to degree level in order for this to be possible. This may be a consideration some time in the future.*

**22) If the FSA in the future wished to transfer MHI's over to the employment of the contracting agencies, would being professionally registered make it easier for them to do this?**

*The only change ultimately, whenever, membership of the Register becomes mandatory, is that only Registered MHIs could carry out Official Auxiliary roles.*

**23) What, if any, changes will this make to the job MHI's actually do?**

*We don't anticipate any changes to the role of the MHI, certainly not on the line. Where we see the real value of gaining professional recognition is in the future, where we should have a much higher profile when it comes to reviewing legislation, making changes to working practices etc. The main change is to the standing of members and the perception of them by employers / industry and the general public.*

**24) What sort of timescale can we expect to see?**

*We see the move towards AMI becoming a Regulatory Body as being a slow process over 3 to 4 years, starting with the voluntary Register and moving through a compulsory register to full Statutory body position – but one step at a time.*

**25) Will we have to carry and produce membership cards?**

*No- but practicing MHI's already have to carry a warrant card with them to be able to enter licensed premises and we can see no difference in carrying a membership card. This could then be produced on demand to any person who might have a reason to contact the AMI concerning that individual.*

**26) Will any information be made available about members on line?**

*In line with other professions that have organisations with professional memberships, it is proposed that a limited amount of information would be made available on-line for members of the public to access. Such information could include information such as names and qualifications and areas or perhaps counties where the member lives i.e. Ian Robinson, RSH Certificate in Meat Inspection, RSH certificate in Poultry Meat Inspection, Gloucestershire. Other details such as the dates of qualification, dates of first registration etc could also be made available. We would have to be very aware of the data protection act and we are acutely aware that some individuals are very anti the meat industry, and would publish nothing that could compromise any individual working in meat inspection.*

**27) What benefit would MHI's get from professional recognition?**

*Our aim is to reach the point where FBO's, indeed, anybody involved in the production of meat for human consumption will have absolute confidence in the MHI's working in their premises, simply by virtue of the fact that they are registered members. This will be achieved by all members having demonstrated their competency and the fact that FBO's and the General Public will have recourse to the Council in case of dispute. This should enhance the reputation of MHI's so that they garner respect wherever they might find themselves employed, something that we feel has been largely lost in recent years.*

**28) Will the Council of the Association of Meat Inspectors have to change its structure?**

*Possibly. But members can rest assured that whatever changes might occur in the future, MHI's will continue to be represented by working MHI's sitting on the council, offering the practical advice that only working MHI's are in a position to provide.*