

General Secretary's Report



Hello to you all,

Code of Conduct

I am happy to be able to report that, at the Association's AGM in April, the vote was taken, and carried, to formally adopt the Code of Conduct that has been drawn up over the past few months.

There was no opposition to the adoption of the Code at the meeting and I have to say, very little in the course of consultation; mostly just comments and observations that were taken to Council for discussion and, in a few cases, amendments, mostly to do with wording, punctuation and minor details rather than the main substance of the document.

We are happy with the final Code which merely seeks to set down formally that which Meat Hygiene Inspectors abide by day in day out anyway. It is intended that the Code should be a kind of "rolling" document which will be able to be amended as and when/if necessary, though having been formally adopted this would take place by way of proposal, discussion and voting at subsequent AGM's.

The code is now available for anybody to access on our website at www.meatinspectors.co.uk

Website

If you do take the time to access the website and take a look for yourselves, you will hopefully notice that the whole website has been redesigned and now has a much more modern, up to date look about it, without any clutter and which will allow us much more scope for the future.

This new site was again, formally adopted at AGM and went live on Saturday 5th May.

I would like to thank Jeremy Thomas, our IT manager at this point, for the tremendous effort on his part in getting the site ready in time for the AGM.

Lactic Acid Washing

The subject of lactic acid washing of beef carcasses has yet again been raised by those so eagerly wishing to see this proposal go through. This time however, there was a significant change/omission to the wording, that went like this;

I would like to inform you that the draft Commission regulation concerning the use of lactic acid to reduce the surface microbiological contamination on bovine carcasses is once again on the agenda of the Scientific Committee meeting on 15 May. We understand that there may be a possible vote.

The key change to the latest version of the draft proposal is the removal of the wording that the lactic acid should be applied only "after post mortem inspection is completed and the meat has been declared fit for human consumption".

As you might have imagined, this prompted several responses, all of them

critical of this proposal, the AMI included. I gave the opinion that this would perhaps be the biggest retrograde step in meat hygiene since the revocation of the clean livestock policy and that resources might be better utilised in making HACCP work in the way that it was first envisaged i.e. proactive rather than reactive. The reply to this collective criticism was thus;

Thank you for all your comments at the end of last week in relation to the proposed change to the latest draft of the lactic acid proposal and in particular your concerns relating to the removal of the wording that the lactic acid should be applied only “after post mortem inspection is completed and the meat has been declared fit for human consumption” and your concerns that removal of this wording may undermine protection. The key safeguard in the draft proposal is that lactic acid solution can only be applied to carcasses that are free of faecal contamination, which continues to be clearly stated in the current proposal. The responsibility for proper application of the solution (including the temperature, the concentration, that no faecal contamination is on the carcass) is firmly with the FBO as part of his/her own food safety management system (HACCP). If the FBO fails to comply with those requirements the officials can take robust enforcement action, including the use of remedial action notices (RANs) stopping the FBO applying the solution or the use of hygiene enforcement notices (HINs) asking the FBO to modify their HACCP plan to comply. But we also recognise that the additional wording that lactic acid should be applied only “after post mortem inspection is completed and the meat has been declared fit for human consumption” has the benefit of an additional safeguard and would also facilitate enforcement. With this in mind we will continue to influence

the European vote on this proposal to ensure the best outcome for the UK

Whether or not the collective opinion of those who responded held any particular sway over the Scientific Committee I cannot say, but I do believe that we were heard as I later received this information;

The lactic acid proposal was not presented for a vote yesterday. It appears that the Commission will continue to work on issues discussed, including the timing of application

I will continue to keep you informed of progress with this draft regulation

I hope that this demonstrates very clearly that if, as we have done, we present an honest, impartial opinion based upon our own expertise, and seeking to preserve public health, animal health and animal welfare, we can and do have an input. I would like to thank all members who take the time to let me know what is happening “on their patch”. This information is invaluable and helps me to correlate the thinking of the membership on a wider scale than would be possible otherwise.

The EU is not the only state considering anti-microbial washing. The following article has appeared on the Food Standards Australia/New Zealand website, and I sincerely believe that our colleagues in those countries are of a similar mind to ourselves and will speak out against such proposals.

Australian Antimicrobial washing

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) said DBDMH had been given the go-ahead to be used as an antimicrobial washing agent across the board – although its main uses were likely to treat meat and poultry, as well as water in ice-

making systems for use in poultry processing.

The approval came following an application by Elanco Animal Health to amend Standard 1.3.3 – Processing Aids, of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*

FSANZ confirmed it had carried out the appropriate assessment and found the substance was fit for purpose – or “*technically justified*” - and posed no public health risks.

Joint entry request rejected

When added to water, DBDMH hydrolyses to form hypobromous acid - an active compound that possesses antimicrobial activity. Hypobromous acid kills bacteria present on the surface of food such as *E.coli O157:H7* and *Salmonella*, said the food safety watchdog.

It noted that the regulations currently allow for use of a similar antimicrobial halohydrantoin agent called bromo-chloro-dimethylhydantoin (BCDMH) for the treatment of all foods.

Elanco asked that the entry for BCDMH be replaced with a joint entry for DBDMH and BCDMH in the part of the Code relating to permitted bleaching, washing and peeling agents.

However, FSANZ has proposed including DBDMH as a separate entry to clearly distinguish the different residues from each chemical and their levels.

This permission would include maximum permitted levels (MPLs) of 2.0 mg/kg for dimethylhydantoin (DMH) and 2.0 mg/kg for inorganic bromide in the treated food. The MPL for inorganic bromide from the new chemical differs to the maximum

amount of 1.0 mg/kg of inorganic bromide, said the body.

Try the following website link if you wish to read a full copy of the approval report

http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/_srcfiles/A1054%20DBDMH%20as%20a%20PA%20AppR%20FINAL.pdf

Rants

The last edition of the Meat Hygienist had within its pages a “rant” by one of the members. It was thought it might be a good idea to include it to try and stimulate a reasoned debate. My thoughts on some of the the subjects being “ranted” about were included in my report in that issue. What has in fact happened is that further “rants” have been received, tearing the ground up about all sorts of issues from novice OV’s heading teams of vastly experienced MHI’s to the organisation of the FSA. It was felt by myself and other members of the National Council that these “rants” were decidedly outside the stated remit of the Association and certainly stepping outside the scope of the Meat Hygienist itself. Unless there is, or likely to be an impact on public health, animal health or welfare, or steps outside the remit of providing educational material for MHI’s, or the general public, the Executive decision has been taken not to include any further “rants”. This said, I have always maintained that I would not shy away from giving honest opinion to those that should hear such opinion, and I will make good on that commitment when I next meet with the Director of Operations, Mr. Andrew Rhodes. I will discuss with him the concerns and opinions received, all with anonymity

assured, and I will feed back to members via this report at sometime later in the year.

I have said before, but I think it is worth re-iterating, that the job has changed in many aspects in recent years. For better or worse is the root of the debate, much of the change being instigated by the EU.

I believe that MHI's should be flexible and adaptable enough to cope with this change, even if they don't like it very much. And what needs to happen is accurate record keeping, both of contamination presented for post-mortem inspection, inadequacies in the staining/disposal of by-products, rejections, problems and their resolution etc. I honestly can't think of another way of MHI's demonstrating that they are doing a sterling job. Further, I truly believe that consumer confidence and therefore the industry would suffer if we were not in place to do what we do best. As long as I continue to believe that, and as long as the membership are happy with job I strive to do as the General Secretary, and are happy for me to do so, I will continue to feed back these opinions further up the hierarchy. So, please keep the opinions coming!!!

Seminar 2012

This year Seminar is over the weekend of 7th, 8th and 9th September at Sutton Bonnington. There will be more spaces available than last year and a bigger event is anticipated and will include presentations about the diversification of the Inspectors Role, eartag fraud, meat inspection the Spanish way and the Schmollenburg Virus, among others.

An application form can be found in this copy but if you don't wish to be cutting pages from your copy of Meat Hygienist, then please e-mail this years event co-ordinator Stephen Holden with the application form that can be downloaded from the website; click on the "events" button and then onto Seminar.

I look forward to catching up with the regular attendees and hopefully a few new faces too.

See you there!!!

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Ian Robinson