

General Secretary's Report



Hello to you all,

C. Ovis – a call for consistency

There has been some considerable debate just recently about exactly what constitutes a “generalised” condition when talking about *Cystercercus Ovis*. Those of you who know me will be aware that I have had my own thoughts and opinion on this matter for many years. I was contacted by a practicing OV who knew of my concerns and also shares those concerns. I asked him to write an article detailing his points and then wrote an article myself by way of response. These articles were then submitted for the scrutiny of the AMI Council, thus being subjected to the benefit of many years of experience. The Council agreed that what had been written was indeed a practical approach to the issue and consented to it being put out for wider scrutiny. The two articles have now been available for anyone to read on the Association's website for the past few weeks; www.meatinspectors.co.uk and for the benefit of those members who do not

have access to the internet, they are available to read further in to this edition of *The Meat Hygienist*.

As stated in the articles, we hope to stimulate a reasoned debate with the people that know this subject best i.e. your own good selves, in order to help create an inspectorate standard that will be acceptable throughout industry.

Lactic acid washing of beef carcasses

By the time this edition of *The Meat Hygienist* goes to press, the proposal for the use of lactic acid to decontaminate beef carcasses will yet again have gone to a vote. If there is no opinion from the Council (i.e. neither a qualified majority for the Council proposal nor a qualified majority against) then the Commission will be able to adopt the proposal provided that the European Parliament does not object within 4 months (by February 2013). It is interesting to note that the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation have also come out very strongly against this proposal and MEP's are preparing to contest this matter if it gets as far as the Parliament itself. So, fingers crossed and we might just see this proposal put to bed.

Proposal to stop BSE testing of healthy slaughtered cattle in England and Wales

There has recently been a consultation on this subject and the AMI council think that the suggestion makes good sense; The incidence of BSE in the UK is already

extremely minimal following the substantial year on year reduction in cases following the introduction of the feed ban in 1996. It is also believed that the current SRM controls will remove up to 99% of infectivity in affected animals anyway, which effectively means that any risk is miniscule. Therefore we believe that the proposal is both well placed and timely though we would advocate the continuation of SRM controls, with 100% compliance in their removal, in exactly the same way as they are currently.

EFSA Opinion; the AMI response

I hope that you will all be aware of the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) opinion with regards to meat inspection of swine and poultry. Essentially it states that traditional meat inspection does not adequately address the present day dangers that might be posed by fresh meat (micro-biological hazards) and calls for a visual only inspection (routinely) and that many of the “pathologies” that we deal with day to day should be considered to be nothing more than “quality issues” and could therefore be dealt with by the food business operator. They even go as far as suggesting that, for these reasons, traditional meat inspection of poultry has no value at all and could therefore be dropped altogether.

The Association feel that although we appreciate the need to better address those risks to human health in the form of micro-biological hazards, the EFSA opinion does not fully address the “wholesomeness” aspect of meat production, and as we feel this is not in the best interests of the consumer, we

cannot support many of the points in the proposal i.e. any system that means meat inspection is not fully independent, any system that removes wholesomeness decisions from the Competent Authority, any system that could lead to the “watering down” of the qualifications of those involved in meat inspection. We also firmly believe that the consumer would expect that every animal slaughtered for human consumption receives a post-mortem inspection.

We suspect that the remit given to the experts within EFSA meant they could not really have given answers other than they did, but we feel that simply taking in to account zoonotic conditions when considering the modernisation of meat inspection is somewhat short of what the consumer might reasonably expect from the regulatory authorities.

In Dresden in October, the board meeting of The European Working Community for Food Inspection and Consumer Protection (EWFC) also decided that this was not in the best interests of the consumer. Their thinking was that we are part of these organisations to protect and further enhance the protection of the consumer, both in the matter of actual food safety and in the matter of the wholesomeness of the food and that these EFSA proposals were well removed from this thinking.

Therefore, not only have the EWFC decided not to support these proposals, they have decided to actively oppose these proposals.

North East and North West Divisions

The North East division has not had in place a Divisional Secretary for some time now and, following a consultation period with the members concerned, the National Council has taken the decision to merge the North East and the North West divisions into one division, the Northern Division, for the ease of continuation of administration. It has been noted that any divisional meetings could require greater distances to be travelled some members, (as is the case in the South West division) and it would be down to the divisional secretary to accommodate these members and to move the locations of the meetings accordingly so that all members could have reasonable access to at least one meeting over the course of a year. However, recognising the practicalities of this situation, the Council have decided to make this a temporary interim measure that can either be formally adopted at an AGM or reverted when a divisional secretary can be appointed.

Professional Recognition

As you will be aware, the Code of Conduct has been formally adopted by the AMI and made available for members to see on the website. The next stage is the adoption of a voluntary register which, by signing, will mean that Registered Meat Hygiene Inspectors will agree to voluntarily abide by the code.

Many of you will have already signed the forms that were sent out some years previously but there is a fundamental difference between now and then in that previously, a code of conduct did not exist and was not therefore something that

members signing would have been subscribing to. For this reason, the National Council believe that it would be prudent to run the exercise again stating clearly on the form that anyone signing will be agreeing to abide by the Code of Conduct, albeit at this stage at a voluntary level. This could then be made mandatory at a time when the Regulations have changed to allow this to happen.

It is intended that the Officers of the Association sign up in the first instance and make the formal declaration at the AGM in Edinburgh. This will then allow them to be in a position to formally take the declaration of later signees at events such as Seminar, Divisional Meetings or any other such events that might be able to accommodate such formalities.

We will make the application form available in the next issue of Hygienist and also on line.

With this being my last report of 2012 I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Ian Robinson