

## General Secretary's Report



Hello to you all.

I hope that you all had a good Christmas break and would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and prosperous 2016.

### Professional Recognition

In late 2015, I received an e-mail from the Registrar of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), Gordon Hockey, informing the Association of recent progress towards professional recognition for meat hygiene inspectors.

He informed us that the latest meeting of RCVS council had considered the merits of 'allied professionals' to the veterinary profession achieving associate status, not just meat inspectors, but a whole range of other professions such as the artificial insemination of cattle and horses, equine dentition practitioners and such like. Such discussions have been held before but the significant difference now is that the Royal Charter was revised in 2015 and now provides for a legal structure to actually allow for this to happen.

The council decided that they should set out the core principles of the RCVS, setting standards that would include the groups to be considered, levels of

education, who would be allowed to practice, levels of continuing professional development etc. (please note that this list is not exhaustive). Only then would the RCVS start to consider applications from individual organisations such as the AMI

As a very brief summary, the discussions at RCVS council were very positive, and they agreed to progress the idea of Associate memberships. We were gratified to learn that meat inspection and MHI's/AMI will be high in the list of priority.

We were informed that ultimately, any application would have to be approved at an Annual General Meeting of the RCVS, and that realistically, this is unlikely to be before 2017. As one prominent friend to the Association told me, 'a process has been put in place' and this can only be good news.

As I have stated before, I will keep you all updated through these pages as and when we learn more.

### The Year Ahead

I feel that the year ahead could bring with it some significant challenges; once again, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) have been tasked with increasing efficiency and making cost savings, although I don't believe that these are as significant as those in some other governmental departments. A recognition perhaps of what has already been achieved and the efforts of MHI's in aiding this achievement. I think that we can all play a further part in this by looking to our own personal practices; for instance, do we all

need a new set of gloves for each session, or even each day? I am happy to go on record in stating that I am able to utilise a set of 'under gloves' (not the thin disposable over gloves) for anything up to two weeks, changing them only if they get contaminated inside or sustain damage somehow. Granted that these are a PVC type of glove due to some fairly severe allergy to anything remotely rubber in manufacture, but by washing and sterilising at the end of each working day, it can be achieved. Over the course of twelve months, I think this must add up to a substantial cost saving, and if you multiply this over the entire numbers of MHI'S and CMHI's, well I am sure that you can appreciate the figures for yourselves.

I also think that this coming year will see some enhanced thinking with regards to animal welfare and the monitoring by MHI's. Industry have had some fairly stiff challenges to rise to now that the protection of animals at the Time of Killing (PATOK) regulations have come in to force in England, and the requirement to have anybody involved in the handling of live animals obtain the certificates of competence (CoC's) relevant to their aspects of work.

Therefore I feel we all also have our part to play, and I am confident that all AMI members will continue to do so as they have in the past.

Our Editor Bill Strachan posed a good scenario in the last edition of Meat Hygienist, and I believe he had some good responses from the membership as to how they would each deal with the situation as individuals. I don't envy Bill in selecting the responses to publish!!!

This year will also see work being done to enhance the Food Chain Information and the Collection and Communication of Inspection Results (FCI/CCIR). Again, although this is going to be organised centrally, I firmly believe that MHI's can play a much enhanced role here, simply by talking to producers and encouraging them to ask what is found in the livestock that they produce. I know from my dairy hygiene work that there are a substantial number of farmers out there that do not like the thought of electronic communications and the like, and here lies an opportunity for the MHI to make a real difference.

A personal example of this is the time when a farmer sent in a heifer that he had spent a not inconsiderable sum purchasing, seeking to enhance the genetics within his herd. He was complaining that he simply could not get her in to calf, had taken the decision cut his losses and to send her in to slaughter, and would I please take a close look and see if I could identify anything that might give him a clue as to what the problem might have been. When the animal was slaughtered and the green offals were presented for inspection I quickly identified that where the ovaries should have been, there were in fact a pair of testes. Problem solved, and he at least had his mind put to rest that there was nothing more that he could have done.

However, this very specific sort of information is not likely to be communicated back to the farmer via the current, normal reporting procedures. I was happy to be able to be of assistance in this situation, or indeed, any other time that a similar request might be made, and I am confident that all members will be of a

similar persuasion if, and hopefully, when such requests are made of them.

### Annual General Meeting

Having held the last three English AGM's in Bristol, (to take advantage of the excellent communication at the intersection of the M4 and M5) this year the decision has been taken to hold the 2016 AGM in the Midlands, to allow the membership there who have been particularly stalwart in their support of the AMI to be more easily able to attend.

Therefore I can confirm that the Annual General Meeting 2016 will be held on Saturday 9th April, at Kettering Park Hotel, Northamptonshire. The meeting will start at 10:30 am and I hope to see a really good attendance.

I would request that any member wishing to attend could drop me an e-mail or return the application form to me so that attendees can be catered for. Thankyou.

Any formal proposals for the national AGM need to come from the divisional AGM's, with at least twenty-eight days notice provided to the General secretary by each divisional secretary in accordance with the AMI rulebook.

### Robin Irish Award

The Robin Irish Award is awarded (not necessarily every year) at seminar, 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, Chief Veterinary Officer in Northern Ireland, and a former veterinary advisor to the AMI, qualifies on all counts, and Robert has been instrumental in the Association's efforts in working to

achieve a formal professional recognition for Meat Hygiene Inspectors in their own right. Unfortunately, Robert was unable to attend this year's event and Charlie Mason (himself a previous recipient) accepted the award on Roberts's behalf.

Charlie presented the award to Robert at a BVA function during the festive period and Robert e-mailed us in the New Year to acknowledge receipt of the award and I think that his comments are worthy of note;

*"I am writing to you to thank you formally for the Association's decision to award me the Robin Irish Award.*

*As a veterinarian, I have always held the relationship I have developed with the meat inspector's Association to be of the utmost importance and have enjoyed both the knowledge and friendships I have gained through this unique relationship.*

*I have also been pleased to offer the Association whatever advice I have been able to over the years.*

*I continue to be at the service of the Association in whatever way you may require in the future".*

The Association of Meat Inspectors agrees that the relationship between the MHI and veterinarian is indeed a unique one, and one that could and should be enhanced in the months and years to come.

The Association was extremely gratified to be able to make this award this year, and, on behalf of both the Council and the Trust, I would like to thank Robert for all his efforts on our behalf. I think it is fair to state that we would not be where we are now without his input.

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Ian Robinson