

General Secretary's Report



Hello to you all.

You will have noticed that your edition of Meat Hygienist has been a little slow to arrive through your door the past couple of editions, and I can only apologise to you for this. This is due to unexpected difficulties experienced by our new editor.

Your new look Meat Hygienist is now in colour and hopefully back on track with regards to future editions. We have had some very favourable comments with regards to the new look and format, but also to the content. The article on the recognising the effectiveness of stunning was very well received and the AMI has given permission for the article to be reproduced and placed on office wall / slaughtermens messes etc.

VPHA Spring Conference

The AMI attended the VHA spring conference in Birmingham in April. We received six presentations throughout the course of the day, one of which was directly relevant to Meat Hygiene Inspectors; Dr. Mike Jessop BSc, MRCVS gave a presentation entitled 'Echinococoids – Traditional and Emerging'. Essentially he reminded us of the life cycle of the tapeworms involved,

the areas of the country where these are most prevalent and informed us that the biggest problems are with farm/working dogs that either have access to fallen stock or which are fed raw meat from such animals by design.

As MHI's we will all be familiar with Echinococcus Granulosus and the hydatid cysts that we encounter at post-mortem inspection but he went on to inform us about the potential threat from Echinococcus Multilocularis. Although this is not believed to be present in the UK, it is very prevalent in continental Europe and with the thousands of animals that move between the UK and the continent quite legitimately on pet passports, he did question the observance of the checks required to comply with the conditions of the passport (including worming of dogs prior to their return) and highlighted the risk posed by the illegal trade in puppies from puppy 'farms' in eastern Europe, which has been fairly well covered in the national press in recent months. I think we would all be fairly well aware of these risks already, but he did also highlight a more recent and ever increasing risk. This arises from a belief by some dog owners that the feeding of raw meat to their animals is a good way to proceed. He informed us that this belief appears to be growing in popularity and clearly the risk of perpetuating lifecycles of the various parasites (rather than breaking them) grows with it. This is where I believe that MHI's have an enhanced role to play. I am confident that all MHI's will recognise Hydatid cysts when they see them and dispose of the affected offals in a manner whereby they

go for incineration rather than pet food. Where I believe that we can make a difference is when we are presented with offals that are so obviously affected with a condition that is not transmissible (heavy fluke infestations for example) that the temptation might be just to reject the affected part and dispose of it in the pet food receptacle without really looking too much further. An understandable thing to do, especially on those high speed lines where maintaining a level of hygiene is also very much in mind and where time is at a premium. However, I would urge all MHI's to take a second or two just have a closer look just to make sure that a second, less prevalent condition is not also present, and, if so, to dispose of the affected parts in a manner whereby they are prevented from entering the pet food chain.

I am not questioning the MHI's ability or work ethics, but I am calling for an increased diligence as a belt and braces approach. Clearly the veterinary profession have their role to play as do the pet food industries, and the pet owners themselves. One of the points I made to Dr. Jessop was 'how do we inform Mr. and Mrs. Joe Public about the potential for parasites that might affect their animals in the meat that they might buy without scaring them half to death and affecting the industry'? This is I think an entire debate in its own right. Answers on a post card please!

Food Chain Information and the Collection and Communication of Inspection Results (FCI/CCIR)

In November last year, the FSA initiated a project to revise the list of rejection conditions recorded in all species at post-mortem inspection.

Why this is necessary?

Early in the year, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) held the first of a series of meetings with industry stakeholders, including producers, processors and other governmental departments to review the data collected by Meat Hygiene Inspectors at post-mortem inspection.

The information gathered at these meetings will be used to rationalise the excessively long list of rejection conditions currently in use, and to facilitate ease of use at post-mortem inspection points, particularly where electronic systems (touchscreens) are in use and thus increase the consistency of the information captured.

The rationalisation of the information recorded is necessary in order for industry to be able to make 'better use' of the data in order to improve herd/flock health by facilitating preventative measures and controls on-farm and at the abattoir, further enhancing animal welfare and public health.

Ultimately, this should increase efficiency of production and therefore livestock and meat industry profits and sustainability

The revised system will adhere to the following parameters;

- New FCI/CCIR must meet legislative needs.
- Reporting mechanisms to deliver effective and efficient validation and decision making.
- Concise data to be reported.
- New FCI/CCIR must only be included when it has a clear value for:
 - Public Health
 - Animal Health
 - Animal Welfare

The first meeting was held on 8th January to review the information captured during pig processing, and a second meeting was held on the 27th January to review sheep and cattle processing.

The meetings were very productive with primary producers and veterinarians being very specific about the sort of information that they require, chiefly information about parasitic conditions, pneumonias and conditions that affect thriftiness of the animals.

Processors were also very specific in the sort of information that they require, such as pneumonia/pleurisy, arthritis, tailbites in pigs, as well as part/total carcase and offal rejection conditions.

These consultations form part of an ongoing system of review first initiated by the FSA in 2013 and seek to be inclusive of all aspects of industry, other governmental departments and stakeholders.

Further information or comments can be directed to either Ramon Romero at the Food Standards Agency or you can drop me a line.

When the lists were first revised in 2013, it was acknowledged then that that they would be further revised periodically. Also, industry, both producers and processors had indicated to us the sort of information that they would value most from inspection teams. They also shared their concerns about consistency and therefore the quality of the data recorded.

Taking the second point first; the reasons for inconsistencies can be varied and manifold, and although some of the criticism has been levelled at the MHI on line, FBO systems regarding traceability,

the potential for offal/carcase double recording and line speeds all have their part to play. It is also believed that the current list of rejection conditions is excessively long to be effectively applied at the inspection point.

However, it is felt that we could all renew our efforts to make sure that the information captured is more accurate still by giving the whole issue a thorough review at a local level and by looking at the way things are done. Are we recording in 'real time'? Does an instance of Glassers disease in pigs get recorded as one condition or as peritonitis, pleurisy and pericarditis and therefore register as three conditions etc.

With regards to the information captured being of use to industry and other interested parties such as APHA, the programme leader, Ramon Romero, determined at the outset to directly ask all those involved, particularly producers and private veterinarians, as to what information they required.

Some of the information that they require might appear to be a little different in the future, compared to what we might have been required to capture in the past; some a little more involved and some a touch rationalised.

Rationalisation of recording has, in the past, led to criticism by some MHI's and formation of the opinion that a 'dumbing down' process was being put in place.

Be assured that this is most definitely not the case. The skills of the MHI's in recognising and dealing with the many differing conditions and protecting public health is not in question and will in no way be compromised. It is simply recording the

information in a format that the interested parties can more effectively utilise.

In the plant where I work, we still capture all the information in detail and then 'condense' the information into the simplified format required to enter on to the electronic recording system.

We appreciate that not all teams have the opportunity or the time to make this particular system work, but MHI's can be very creative when rising to such challenges and we have been assured that the management are really not concerned about how or what is captured at a local level as long as the information that is submitted centrally is uniform, accurate and consistent.

The post-mortem information captured has a huge role to play in the approach to improving animal health and welfare. We know just how much store MHI's put in these issues, and feel confident that they will take a pragmatic approach to this review. To this end, if any MHI has a further contribution to make, like an issue or situation that might be unique to their plant, or an idea that they feel might have been overlooked, then why not drop me a line and I'll submit any such queries or information for further consideration?

FSA management are on board, other governmental departments and industry is on board and we believe MHI's will come on board too.

The anticipated roll-out dates for the new list of conditions going live are;

- North West of England w/c 23rd May
- North East of England w/c 6th June
- South East of England w/c 20th June

- South West of England w/c 4th July
- Wales w/c 18th July

Seminar 2016

Seminar this year will again be held at Harper Adams University over the weekend of 16th – 17th September.

The application form can be found inside this copy of Meat Hygienist but, if you don't really wish to be cutting pages out of your copy, a downloadable form is also available on the website at www.meatinspectors.co.uk

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Ian Robinson