

## General Secretary's Report



A warm welcome to you all.

In April, we held our National AGM in Edinburgh in glorious spring weather. There were updates on what the Association has been involved in during the past twelve months. This has included further discussions with both the Food Standards Agency, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and others regarding progress towards Professional recognition, as a stakeholder in the development of a competency framework for Food Standards and our continuing close relationship as a member of the EWFC.

At present discussions with the RCVS have been affected by the necessity to focus on preparations for the UK exit from Europe, a position which we fully understand. However, this has given the Association some additional time to consider fully the two proposed models. This will enable us to enter in to the next meeting fully prepared to discuss how we wish to proceed. The Council will keep you informed of progress, and we welcome any member who has questions or points they wish to raise on this important subject to contact their Divisional Secretary or myself.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ian Robinson on being elected as a Vice President of the Association. Ian's experience as a Meat Hygiene Inspector and his many years as our secretary, will be invaluable to helping the AMI continue to represent our membership at the highest level.

Following this year's Divisional AGM's, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome some new Officers to the South West Division. Michelle Barrett has been elected as the new Divisional Secretary, and I look forward to working with her on Council. I know that she has some great idea's for increasing engagement with our South West membership, and for future Divisional meetings.

I would also like to welcome Aneliya Watson as the new South West Chair and Treasurer. I'm very grateful to Annie for agreeing to fill both these posts, and I know she will be great at supporting Michelle.

Prior to our AGM, the European Working Community for Food Inspection and Consumer Protection also met in Edinburgh for their Spring Board Meeting. Representatives from across Europe came together to discuss matters and concerns to the forthcoming European Union Food Controls. One major concern is the proposed changes to poultry Ante and post Mortem inspection from 100% inspection to a percentage of each batch. Although this has been agreed by the European Parliament, our concern is that they will wish to expand this to other species. The EWFC feels that this decision has been based on insufficient evidence of the effect this could have on the consumer and public health. Great efforts have been made to reduce the risk from food borne pathogens, by the Regulator and Industry, and anything which threatens this progress should be challenged.

Another topic that was discussed was the question of transparency in Food Inspections and the information provided to the consumer. Many Countries have introduced various schemes to inform the public about how well a business performs. This includes the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in the United Kingdom, and various alternatives, such as 'smiley' faces elsewhere.

It has been suggested that some of this work could be covered by utilising industry assurance schemes. However, the consensus around the table was this should remain with each Countries Competent Authority, ensuring that the information provided to the consumer is impartial, transparent and freely available.

In what was to be another surprise, the EWFC presented Ian Robinson with a plaque and an Honorary Vice Presidency of the EWFC. This was in recognition and thanks for the time he had been the United Kingdom representative to their Board, and to be an open invitation to attend meetings if he wished in future.

Personally, I would like to congratulate Ian and thank him for all the help and guidance he has, and continues to give to both organisations.

By the time you receive this edition, the successful applicants from the second phase of Official Auxiliary recruitment will have started their journey to becoming qualified Meat Hygiene Inspectors. In time they will also have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills to include Animal welfare, Dairy and Unannounced Inspections. The latter are also area's open to any qualified member.

I have been fortunate to meet both groups during their induction weeks, and I was struck by their enthusiasm to get straight into both the practical and theory aspects of our role. The trainees come from a diverse background, including the meat trade and farming, but I feel that the recruitment process has worked in finding the right people for the job. I know from speaking with the ones in my area, that Inspectors have made them very welcome in plant, and I would like to encourage you all to pass on your many years of knowledge and experience. This group is the future, and whilst our role might diversify further over time, the knowledge that has been accumulated from both our predecessors and currently, can never be replaced if not passed on now.

The third phase of recruitment is currently taking place across England and Wales, to bring the total to the thirty six that were announced just before last year's seminar. If you know of anyone who has either applied, or is thinking of having a go in the future,

why not offer to give them some advice or a helping hand? The Civil Service recruitment process is a daunting prospect for somebody who maybe hasn't looked at a change of career for many years, so a few pointers with competencies and success profiles would no doubt be very welcome.

The Trustees are now finalising the details of this year's seminar with most of the speakers now confirmed. There are more details, and a registration form included with this edition. If you would like to apply for Divisional sponsorship, please contact your Divisional Secretary, and complete and return the registration form to Stephen Holden, our Seminar Co-ordinator. Further details will be posted on our website at [www.meatinspectors.co.uk](http://www.meatinspectors.co.uk) in due course.

Please put the dates for this year's seminar in your diaries. These are Friday September 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday September 15<sup>th</sup> at Harper Adams University.

Finally, we have recently received a number of enquiries on membership matters. The main query is about receiving communications from the Association, such as receipt of this journal. Could I ask that everyone keeps their contact details updated with our Registrar. Michelle can be contacted via an email to [laurellady13@gmail.com](mailto:laurellady13@gmail.com) and she will keep your Division and our Editor updated with any alterations. This is the only way that we can receive any changes, as Data Protection Legislation is very clear on what information can be shared between different organisations.

Another query is that only some members of an inspection team receive The Meat Hygienist, but everyone thought they were a member. If you are employed by the Food Standards Agency, your membership fee is covered each year. However, you still need to complete a membership form to provide your details to the Association. This is due to the protection of personal data mentioned previously, and also because it is your choice whether you wish to be a member or not.

The Association would be delighted to welcome anyone as new members, and a membership form can be downloaded and printed from our website. If you are applying as an FSA employed member, there is no need to complete the bank details.

I hope you have a great summer, and our traditional weather is replaced by long sunny and warm days.

Regards,

Jeremy Thomas