

General Secretary's Report



A warm welcome to you all.

By the time you receive this edition of The Meat Hygienist, we will have held this year's seminar, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our speakers for presenting talks on a wide variety of interesting and topical subjects, all the delegates who attended and asked interesting questions during the various sessions, and all the staff from Harper Adams University who once again looked after everyone with superb facilities, excellent food and tremendous support to the organisers. Special thanks should go to Stephen Holden and all my fellow Trustees for the massive amount of work they put into ensuring that each year we have a fantastic weekend. We are very ably supported by the rest of the AMI Council, as well as Brian Bull and Jerome Timothy, who look after both the AMI Library display and ensure all our delegates are registered and made welcome on arrival.

The Trust this year wished to honour one of its own, who had selflessly gone to the assistance of two Police Officers whilst visiting friends. The officers had been attacked by a savage dog and had received serious injuries. David Ogden immediately went to their aid and was similarly attacked before the dog was called away. David's wife also gave first aid until the emergency services were able to attend. Following what has been a very difficult year, Lorraine and David joined us as guests for the whole weekend, where we endeavoured to give them a relaxed time. I'm sure everyone who knows David wishes him well for his continued recovery.

One popular exhibitor who was unfortunately unable to visit this year, was W. R. Wrights. This particularly well-known supplier of everything you might need in the meat industry, has been particularly busy with a massive workload generated by the inevitable changes brought about by Brexit. However, they will be returning in 2020.

Once again at our Seminar Dinner, we were delighted to register six more colleagues as Registered Meat Hygiene Inspectors. This included several employees from our

Service Delivery Partner, and those directly employed by the Food Standards Agency. I would like to thank them and Eville and Jones for their continued support in sending delegates each year.

The evening was rounded off by the presentation of The Robin Irish Award. The award is made each year to someone who has contributed greatly to the work of the Association, or the industry as a whole, and the recipient is decided by the Treasurer and General Secretary. Whilst looking at the list of past recipients for a new page for our website, we realised that there was one significant person who had never received the award, so the choice was made. The next task was to devise a change in how the award was given this year so, in the best tradition of the established awards ceremonies, a sealed envelope was provided. When the announcement was made, the look of surprise was complete when our own President went to read out his own name. Our warmest congratulations go to Archie Anderson as the 2019 winner of The Robin Irish Award. The pictures below show Archie announcing the winner, receiving his award from Vice President John Pratt and a picture of Archie with his great friend Jim Fallens.



I hope to be able to welcome you to our 55th Seminar in September next year.

As we head towards the end of 2019, there are some changes to EU legislation coming in to force. Since the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, we were aware that Regulation (EC) 854/2004 was going to be replaced. This takes place in

December and will be replaced by a number of implementing acts under the new Regulation. With our European partners in the EWFC, we raised some particular concerns regarding changes to poultry ante- and post-mortem inspection which will allow EU member states to decide if they wish to move to a system of batch inspection, instead of the current requirement for 100% inspection at both ante- and post-mortem inspection. Whether this will happen remains to be seen, but I sincerely hope that it doesn't. As Meat Hygiene Inspectors, our core values are to protect Public Health, Animal Health and Animal Welfare, which I believe is best served by maintaining 100% supervision across both the white and red meat sectors. I would like to stress that although this option will be within the new regulations, it does not necessarily follow that the United Kingdom will adopt it. We have seen that since the change to visual-only inspection by default in the pig sector, many plants with large export markets still request that detailed inspection is carried out. This is to satisfy the countries to which they export.

Personally, I believe we have a good opportunity here to showcase the excellent animal health and welfare standards the meat industry currently has and use it to the industry and country's advantage when looking for new export markets after our departure from the EU.

We are fortunate to have working within the Food Standards Agency, MHI's who have diversified to carry out additional duties such as Unannounced Inspections, Animal Welfare Visits, Dairy Inspections etc. These dedicated people carry out much of this work in addition to their Meat Inspection duties, and it is a credit to their dedication that when things do go wrong, they are rectified by working in unison with our veterinary colleagues, inspection teams and Food Business Operators. A true 'One Team' approach. The quality of the evidence they help to gather has contributed to several successful prosecutions this year. It's also encouraging to see that the court system is making judgements that will hopefully discourage those who wish to break the law, to think again.

As I conclude this report, I have just returned from spending the first induction week with the third phase of new Official Auxiliaries to the Agency. Once again, I have been very impressed with the quality of the successful candidates, and how keen they are to start their studies towards becoming fully qualified Inspectors. Included in the group were a number of previously qualified staff, who have either transferred across to work for the Agency or worked for the MHS/FSA previously. This mixture of knowledge helped the group to 'gel' together quickly. I am sure that all staff working within Field Operations will be on hand to pass on their knowledge, as we had when first starting our careers. The recruitment program has also given further opportunities to existing staff, as a number have undertaken training to become assessors for the new staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made the recruitment successful this year, as I have seen first-hand their enthusiasm to see the project succeed, and how hard they have all worked. I look forward to meeting further new staff in the future.

The Association will always be available to support any MHI/OA in their studies and have an extensive library of textbooks that can be borrowed. Please contact Stephen Holden (sjhold1970@hotmail.com) to discuss.

Finally, I am shortly going to undertake a complete rebuild of the Association's website. This will refresh the look and make it easier to add content or new features in the future.

Best wishes to you all

Regards,

Jeremy Thomas