

General Secretary's Report



A very warm welcome to you all.

As we head towards another autumn living with Covid, the pressure on all frontline staff continues without any respite. Once again, the professionalism of everyone working in meat establishments has shone through, and its testament to your dedication, that there have been no service failures across the whole country. We have been ably backed up by a small army of qualified staff who are now working elsewhere within the Food Standards Agency, who have dusted off their PPE and joined colleagues to ensure that we deliver wholesome food for the Nation. This has been in addition to their own roles, which have often had to be completed after a full day in plant. I'm sure you will join me in thanking them for being there when needed.

I doubt if there are any amongst us that haven't been affected in some way by the ongoing pandemic, and yet we still continue protecting public health, animal health and animal welfare. My thanks, and the thanks of the AMI Council to you all.

Once again, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel our annual visit to Harper Adams for the seminar, and move to an online event. The decision by the Trust was based on case figures at the time we needed to confirm, as well as the massive pressure we were all under with maintaining service delivery to food premises. We also didn't wish to risk the potential of any infection as a result of gathering speakers and delegates from across the UK. I would like to thank everyone for their understanding and support of the online event. I would especially like to thank all of our speakers who kindly agreed to give up their Friday evening and Saturday to present live. It definitely contributed to the quality and success of the seminar.

The Friday evening began with our President Archie Anderson opening the seminar and welcoming everyone who had joined online. Archie then handed over to our Chair, Peter Watson. Peter's first task was to invite the Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency, Emily Miles, to present virtually the Trainee Meat Hygiene Inspector Award

for 2020. This was presented to Richard Lambert, who joined us from the top of Scafell Pike. More on the presentation and award later in my report.

There then followed updates from Emily Miles and Ian M^c Watt on the current activities within the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland, and then a joint presentation by Dr Colin Sullivan and Richard Wynn-Davies to provide an update on the Operational Transformation Programme, Future Delivery Model for meat controls. This gave delegates an opportunity to ask questions on the impact of the consultation on delivery of Official Controls, and the impact on frontline staff. The consultation and various workstreams, are still ongoing, so the final picture is not yet certain.

A first for the Association, and in keeping with the international status that our seminars often have, was the opportunity to welcome two speakers live from Australia. A very interesting opportunity to learn about the inspection system and training in what could become an important trading partner in the future.

There then followed excellent presentations from Dr Christine Middlemiss Chief Veterinary Officer for England and Wales, Dr Andy Grist from Bristol University and Charles Hartwell from Eville and Jones. Following a break for lunch, we continued with presentations from Dr Robert Huey Chief Veterinary Officer for Northern Ireland, Peter Hardwick British Meat Processors Association, Jason Lonsdale the National Food Crime Unit, and Charles Mason Humane Slaughter Association. The event was not without a few technical issues, but with the support of our speakers, and a few adjustments to the running order, everything went ahead as planned.

The final segment before the seminar was closed, was the presentation of The Robin Irish Award by Archie. This year, the recipient was Graham Anderson. Graham is an Inspector working for Food Standards Scotland, and a massive supporter of the Association. Through his work as National Convenor for Scotland, he has always fought tirelessly to protect and maintain a robust independent inspection service, and he is never afraid to speak up at meetings. Graham also attends seminar every year, and his questions to speakers are always incisive. Congratulations Graham, a very worthy recipient for 2021.

Trainee Meat Hygiene Inspector Award 2020

As previously mentioned, the recipient of the award for 2020 was Richard Lambert. Richard joined the North Region of the Food Standards Agency after working in the meat trade for a number of years.

Each region was asked to review and nominate the student that they felt should be considered for the award. This was based on their portfolio of work, and statements from their assessors and regional Internal Quality Assessor. The portfolios were then reviewed by the judging panel, which comprised of a representative from the FSA, the AMI Council and AMI Trust. The panel members were Robert Thackeray, Peter Watson and Dave Clapham. The review panel were very impressed with the incredibly high standard of work from each candidate, and the decision was not an easy one.

The panel would like to congratulate all the candidates and wish them well in their future careers as Official Auxiliaries / Meat Hygiene Inspectors.

Richard is pictured below with this year's award, and I would like to thank both him and his daughter for the photograph.



The Association also organised its first webinar in August in partnership with AIO Partners. The topic was Export Certification, and was presented by Jatinder Dhami. I would like to thank them and everyone who joined us, for making the evening a success, as this is a subject that will be very important to have a knowledge of, as we trade more widely since leaving the EU.

Returning to the consultation on the Future Delivery Model for Meat Controls, and the Association will continue to present our members questions and comments to the team as the future plans are developed. I would ask that anyone reading this journal who wishes to ask or seek clarity for any concerns they may have, to get in touch with either your Divisional Secretary or myself. The Food Standards Agency are keen to gather as many views as possible, so please do take advantage of this opportunity. Although much of the detail is still to be determined, now is the time to speak up. At the time of writing, the initial report into the consultation has been published. The report can be found at

<https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/consultations/consultation-on-early-proposals-for-a-future-delivery-model-for-fsa-delivered-official-controls-in-the-meat-sector?fbclid=IwAR3jhYXkc5YOcDliG4VkDQQs9Bwqlj5i3r-4r4xA-U7O6exWB7fqaLi7yOQ>

The Association continues to have an active role within the EWFC, and I would especially like to thank their Deputy Secretary General and AMI Vice President, Ron Spellman for all the hard work that he does within the organisation. Ron spends many hours keeping up to date with reports and legislation proposals from the EU and beyond, in order that the EWFC Board are able to discuss and act quickly and appropriately to any changes. Recently, there has been much discussion on the European Green Deal, which the Board has broadly supported. One interesting point was about future trade. The EU are proposing linking future trade to environmental issues, being in line with their ideals. This could certainly be an interesting development for those countries who currently treat the environment differently to Europe.

As always, if you wish to keep updated on the work of the EWFC, please visit their website at ewfc.org.

The Meat Hygienists Pocket Book

In this edition you will find an article from Ralph Wilson announcing the publication of the third edition of The Meat Hygienists Pocket Book. I will leave Ralph to explain the exciting development and plans for this educational textbook, but I would like to add both my personal thanks, and that of the Association's executive to Ralph and Ian Robinson, for getting the third edition produced. The pocket book has been brought fully into the twenty first century, and is now more accessible than ever before. I will be adding direct links to our website at www.meatinspectors.co.uk for those who would like to obtain a copy.

Finally, as this edition should be with you just before Christmas, I would like to thank you all for the hard work and professionalism you have shown throughout 2021 in protecting Public Health, Animal Health and Animal Welfare standards, by going to work each and every day to ensure the Nation had safe and wholesome food. You truly are the unseen heroes within the United Kingdom.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a peaceful and Happy New Year.

Regards,

Jeremy