

General Secretary's Report



Hello to you all,

The Association has represented your interests in several ways these past three months, including attending meetings on training, the use of PIA's and on the issue of ante-mortem inspection.

Training

The Association has attended all the stakeholder meetings to help ensure that the new programme for training future MHI's is of an acceptable standard. The training modules have now been completed and the assessment criteria have been set. Informed opinion is that the modules themselves are very robust and that that the assessment criteria are sufficiently challenging and will be administered by an authorised competent assessor. Once the nine hundred hours of training are completed, the trainee will be assessed working on the line. In the case of poultry this is likely to be in a broiler/hen or turkey plant. Knowledge of the other poultry species would then be assessed by the way of sample tables.

Red meat species would be assessed as each species individually, again on a working line and backed up by a

sample table.

The finished modules are to be banked by IMPROVE food sector skills council and

syllabuses will be written up by interested delivery bodies. It is hoped that new courses will be available in early 2011.

Ante-mortem inspection

The questions asked of us at this meeting were largely aimed at ascertaining the effectiveness of AM inspection, what is likely to be found and whether or not the task could be performed by someone other than the Official Veterinarian?

The Association holds the view that ante-mortem inspection is imperative not least because the three legs of meat inspection; protection of public health, animal health and animal welfare are all covered by AM inspection. It should be remembered too that the protection of public health also extends to operatives on the line, and they should be informed if animals have zoonotic conditions such as Ringworm or Orf. We might not see diseases such as Brucellosis in the UK at the present time, but nor did we see Foot and Mouth disease prior to 2001, and it should be noted that this condition was first identified in the lairage at ante-mortem inspection. So continued vigilance is necessary!

On the question of someone other than the OV carrying out AM inspection, your Association made the meeting aware that many MHI's have performed AM inspection duties in the past and, if necessary and requested to do so, would be more than capable of doing so again, particularly where young/prime stock are to be slaughtered.

One point that was agreed was that it would be necessary in such circumstances to have an OV available at all times.

It was also agreed that refresher training would be necessary. Plant Inspection Assistants

With regard to this meeting, stakeholders were asked to consider three options;

To leave things exactly as they are, but with a cut in the time that the OV is in attendance.

To have a non full time OV attendance with the FBO assuming more responsibility for post-mortem inspection.

The removal of a full time OV presence with the attendant poultry meat inspector assuming more of the role. The OV would remain available and provide supervision.

Of the three available positions, the Association deemed the third one to be more favourable as it appears to retain more independent inspection with full time supervision.

There will be more details forthcoming when the interim report is produced by the company running this exercise, Det Norse Veritas (DNV). We will of course keep you informed of these details when we receive them.

Professional Recognition

The National Council first discussed the formation of a "Council for Meat Inspection" in May 2006, the aims of which are;

- To enhance the standing of the Association, in the perception of members, the public and other professions.
- To ensure the continued financial support of the FSA, who pay the majority of membership fees.

- To ensure that members of the Association can interact with other food safety professionals on an equal footing

To this end, in November 2007 we invited MHI's to voluntarily sign up to a Professional Register of meat inspectors. This was the first step towards setting up a non-statutory framework that would be necessary for such a council to function.

At this time, the legislation governing veterinary surgeons does not allow for the formation of such a council within a statutory framework.

However, the Association has recently held two meetings with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, with a

view to moving towards achieving formal professional recognition, and at the second of these meetings, the President of the RCVS, Mr. Peter Jinman informed us that the Minister for Agriculture, Jim Paice MP had announced his intention to review the legislation covering the regulation of veterinary service provision and this could include veterinary paraprofessionals such as MHI's. Moreover, this review may take place within the term of this current parliament. This could allow the Association of Meat Inspectors to not only achieve the formal professional recognition that we seek, but also to perform the functions of a professional regulatory body.

This would be a very major step for the Association and it would most certainly enhance the status of the MHI. But with increased status comes increased responsibility and there could be significant cost to the AMI; cost of legal processes and appeal, disciplinary

proceedings and administration etc. It could ultimately mean that an MHI would need to be registered to practice and to subscribe to the professional register, thus agreeing to abide by the set codes of conduct and agreeing to be covered by the auspices of a disciplinary panel if and when the need arose, in much the same way as veterinarians and veterinary nurses are currently.

The upside is that MHI's would achieve full professional status and this should make de-regulation much more difficult and lead to increased job security in the future.

Such a council could see the AMI taking on responsibility for the primary training of new MHI's and the ongoing CPD for qualified inspectors, and any persons from the EU wishing to work in meat inspection in the UK would have to be registered first. If this registration was subject to an assessment of competency, alongside simply possessing the necessary qualifications, it should lead to an increase in standards.

Such a move would require approval of members at an Annual General Meeting/Extra-ordinary General Meeting. This matter will be on the agenda for discussion at the AGM in Edinburgh in April and it is hoped that many of you will participate in that discussion.

The RCVS have stated their support for the AMI and our efforts towards these aims. National Council believe this to be a positive move for the longer term and recommends it to you. [Seminar 2011](#)

I can confirm that Seminar 2011 will be held at the University of Nottingham over the weekend of 9/10/11th September. Speakers invited so far include the Humane Slaughter Association, the Which?

Organisation and speakers from the Universities of Bristol and Liverpool.

It is likely that this edition of Hygienist will reach you after Christmas this year and I offer my apologies for the fact that it is slightly late. The decision was taken to delay publication so that the subject of professional recognition could be taken to Council and members be brought up to speed on the very latest thinking.

So, that said I hope that you all had a very happy Christmas and I wish you all a prosperous New Year.

Keep up the good work.

Regards,

Ian Robinson