



## An update on charging

Work is underway to introduce a new charging policy for the work of the MHS.

An initial meeting with industry representatives and other stakeholders was held at York in late January. The meeting agreed to establish a series of workshops that will look in detail at the proposals. One meeting was held in early February and three more are planned.

Organisations taking part in the meeting and workshops include:

- Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers
- Randall Parker Foods Ltd
- National Farmers Union Scotland
- National Farmers Union
- National Association of Catering Butchers
- Foodaware
- Country Landowners and Business Association
- British Poultry Council
- British Meat Processors Association
- Association of Independent Meat Suppliers

The new charging policy will recover a greater share of the costs of meat hygiene and animal welfare inspection over several years. Detailed consideration will be given to vulnerable businesses. This will be an important part of the workshop discussions.

The meat industry has enjoyed a high and increasing level of subsidy from the taxpayer for the last 7 years under the Maclean formula. However, it is not Government policy to use taxpayers' money for long-term subsidy of private businesses. Around £190 million of public money has been put into the meat industry through the Maclean formula subsidy up to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008. The removal of public subsidy will be phased over several years to enable meat businesses to adjust. This phased withdrawal of subsidy will result in a further £100million of public money being contributed over the next 5 years.

The cost base of the MHS is being reduced from £91.3million in 2006-07 to £75million (in real terms) in 2011-12 in order to reduce the cost to industry as the subsidy is phased out.

MHS staff numbers have already been reduced by 130 and a further reduction of 190 posts will be achieved by 2011, predominantly management and support staff.

We are aware that some operators are under the impression that we will be moving to a position of full cost recovery in 2009/10, and obviously this has caused concern for business owners. This is not the case, and hopefully operators are now clear that we are looking to work together to develop a fair charging policy for a value for money service.

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## Update on the MHS Extranet and FCI/CCIR for pigs website

The website to enable the delivery of Food Chain Information from Producers and the feedback of inspection results to FBOs and Producers was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008. As reported in issue 4 of Link, this offered choices to both FBOs and Producers on the method of delivering and receiving this information, namely via the BPEX website or our own MHS Extranet.

During the month of January, 58 FBOs and 491 Producers registered to use the BPEX system, whilst every FBO approved to slaughter pigs was issued with a username and password to enable access to the MHS Extranet. The majority of producers and FBOs were well prepared for the new legislative requirements and the transition has been relatively smooth, proving how working in partnership can deliver real benefits and successes.

The MHS Extranet feedback system continues to evolve with some really useful feedback and suggestions being received from FBOs and Producers alike. There are currently some requests for change being considered and these will hopefully be released with the next version due for release at the end of March, so please keep your ideas coming!

Meanwhile, the MHS has begun trialling the use of wireless hand held data loggers and touch screens to enable ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection results to be collected in 'real time' within the slaughter house. It is expected that this method of collection will considerably reduce time currently spent completing paper forms by OV's and Meat Inspectors, whilst at the same time improving consistency and accuracy of inspection. If the trial proves successful, a request will be made for the necessary funding to roll the solution across all species. Watch this space for the results of the trial!

### Want to know more?

If you would like to find out more about the new MHS website service or you have any ideas or comments please contact Rosie Ripley or Liz Olney by emailing [rosie.ripley@mhs.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.ripley@mhs.gov.uk) or [liz.olney@mhs.gov.uk](mailto:liz.olney@mhs.gov.uk)

## Plant Inspection Assistants – training and qualification

The FSA and MHS are working in close partnership with Improve (the Sector Skills Council covering the meat sector, with responsibility for developing its skills needs) to review the qualification for Plant Inspection Assistants (PIAs) and MHIs, to ensure that these are fit for purpose.

Companies that already have an existing relationship with Improve and the Food Standards Agency through the development of national occupational standards for meat and poultry inspection, will continue to be closely involved in the work on reviewing the qualification. Other members of the British Poultry Council will be consulted by Improve on the proposals developed. It is anticipated that any changes to the qualification would be ready from early Autumn 2008.

If you wish to be consulted by Improve, please contact Sally Jenkins at Improve at: [Sally.Jenkins@improveltd.co.uk](mailto:Sally.Jenkins@improveltd.co.uk) The uncertainty over the requirements for training of PIAs under 854/2004 remains. Currently PIAs are authorised to work under a transitional period for implementation of Regulation (EC) 854/2004, which ends in December 2009. The UK interpretation of the legislation is that PIAs only need to be trained for the duties they are to carry out. The Commission have previously indicated that their reading of the legislation is that PIAs need to be trained to carry out the full range of Official Auxiliary (MHI) duties. An amendment to 854/2004 has been drafted to clarify and confirm the UK position.



## Take the opportunity to tell us your views

In early February all FBOs were sent a copy of the annual MHS Industry Satisfaction Survey. The survey allows FBOs to comment on a wide range of issues - from satisfaction with MHS staff to opinions on the Transformation Programme. The deadline for returning a completed survey is fast approaching - you have until **8th March** to have your opinions heard.

The survey is invaluable in helping the MHS to analyse what is important to you and identify areas where service improvements can be made. Please take the time to complete and return your copy.

If you have not received a copy of the survey, or if you have any questions, please contact Cheryl Smith on 01904 455558.

## MHS Charter Mark success

Following a recent assessment, the MHS has successfully maintained its accreditation of the Charter Mark standard. The MHS has held this accreditation since 1998 and has been successfully reassessed on several occasions.

Charter Mark is the government's national standard of excellence in customer service. It provides a framework for public sector organisations to drive improvements in their service delivery for the benefit of customers. Organisations can apply to be independently assessed against the framework and if they can demonstrate sufficient evidence they are accredited with the Charter Mark standard.

The MHS is assessed on an annual basis and the assessment takes place over 2 days. This year the assessor met with MHS staff in Headquarters and a Regional Office and visited a licensed establishment in the Birmingham area where he had the opportunity to meet with a FBO representative. An important part of each assessment is for the assessor to meet with FBOs or industry representatives in order to evaluate the customer's experience of MHS services.

Participation in the Charter Mark scheme gives the MHS the opportunity to have an independent assessment of our strengths and areas for improvement. The principles behind Charter Mark, such as the emphasis on placing the customer at the heart of the service and understanding and improving the customer experience, support the ethos of the MHS Transformation Programme.

## Contact us

I hope you have found this edition of Link newsletter helpful. We aim to keep FBOs up to date on the latest news and information from the MHS. Link will keep you up to date on EU policy changes, notifiable diseases, changes within the MHS, and other issues that affect your business, as well as providing advice on compliance and best practice, so we can work together effectively to ensure that you produce safe meat.

The newsletter is issued on a monthly basis. We want Link to be a useful and informative publication. Please contact us with any suggestions, comments or ideas for articles or, if you would like to receive Link in a different format, contact us via the dedicated Link mailbox: [link@mhs.gov.uk](mailto:link@mhs.gov.uk) or call 01904 455558.

This is your opportunity to tell us about the issues most important to you. We look forward to hearing from you.

### MHS Communications.



The Meat Hygiene Service is an executive agency of the Food Standards Agency



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