

## FSA Board backs MHS Transformation

The progress made by the Meat Hygiene Service to transform into a leaner and more efficient organisation was applauded by the Board of the Food Standards Agency at its meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> May.

In July 2007 the FSA Board discussed the report of the Review of the Delivery of Official Controls in Approved Meat Premises. At that time, the FSA decided that the MHS should transform itself in line with financial targets set by the FSA. In parallel, the FSA was charged with developing a model for piloting a Control Body, a private sector provider of meat hygiene controls. The position was to be revisited in May 2008, when MHS performance against the transformation targets would be reviewed. The MHS has made radical changes over the last 10 months and has not only met all of the targets set by the FSA but has also exceeded them by:

- reducing the gross cost of operations by £4.4m from £91.3m in 2006/7 to £86.9m in 2007/8
- reducing the net cost of operations by £2.1m from £33.3m in 2006/7 to £31.2m in 2007/8
- reducing the cost per livestock unit by 90p from £14.11 in 2006/7 to £13.21 in 2007/8

In view of the progress made by the MHS and the costs and risks related to piloting a private sector Control Body in part of Great Britain, the FSA Board has agreed that the Control Body pilot should not be pursued. Official controls will continue to be delivered by the MHS. The Board agreed that any future decision on changes in the provision of official controls should be driven by a long-term view of regulatory changes and industry trends.

**Dame Deirdre Hutton**, Chair of the Food Standards Agency said *“When the Board discussed the future of meat inspection back in July last year we left the MHS with a tough challenge. It was clear that to achieve the required level of transformation would require commitment, innovation and strong leadership. We’ve seen the MHS take up the challenge and deliver over and above the targets set out for them. However, the MHS needs to maintain this momentum for change as we work hard with stakeholders and in Europe to change legislation with a proportionate risk-based approach to official controls”*.

To deliver further savings over future years, the MHS is reorganising its operations management team. MHS services are now managed at a local level through the introduction of 12 Business Managers, each leading 3 or 4 clusters of MHS activity in abattoirs and meat cutting plants across GB. The work of all 12 Business Managers will be managed by two Business Directors. The realignment of the management structure aims to maximise efficiency in the way MHS staff are used and how contracted services are provided. It also aims to enhance relationships with local and national stakeholders and the devolved Governments in Scotland and Wales.

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Meat Hygiene Service

## MHS Corporate Business Plan 2008-09

The MHS Corporate Business Plan is now available on the MHS extranet and also on the Meat Hygiene Service section of the FSA's website at:

[www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/mhservice/businesspublications/mhsbusiness0809](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/mhservice/businesspublications/mhsbusiness0809)

### Corporate Business Plan 2008/09 – 2010/11



Whilst we are making many changes to the way we organise ourselves, public health and animal health and welfare remains our number one priority. However, the Business Plan also stresses the importance of achieving greater efficiencies during the next three years.

The MHS cannot transform alone, and industry must work with us, both locally and nationally, to help achieve greater efficiency.

The performance of the MHS will be rigorously monitored to ensure we achieve our corporate objectives and targets. Regular updates will be published in Link, and placed on the FSA website.

## Health and Safety guidance for the Meat Industry

The British Meat Processors' Association (BMPA) hosts the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Meat Trades Joint Working Party. This is an industry committee which meets several times a year to discuss newly arising health and safety issues, communicate information to industry and to develop guidance on health and safety topics. Recent work has seen guidance on Noise at Work, Q Fever and Safety when Handling Cattle in Slaughterhouses, added to a compendium of guidance which now extends to 35 items.

Noel Sykes, MHS Health and Safety Manager and Chair of the Joint Working Party commented:

“This guidance is produced by the industry for the industry. The Joint Working Party provides an opportunity for industry, the HSE and the MHS to come together and debate important health and safety issues. The MHS is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this process”.

The guidance is published on the BMPA website and can be accessed by all of the meat industry. It can be found at: [www.bmpa.uk.com/\\_attachments/resources/971\\_S4.pdf](http://www.bmpa.uk.com/_attachments/resources/971_S4.pdf)

## FSA DVD

The Food Standards Agency has produced a new DVD for food businesses that aims to provide an additional route for accessing up-to-date guidance on safe methods for food preparation, handling and storage. The DVD complements information packs already being used by thousands of small businesses under the Agency's "Safer Food, Better Business" programme (SFBB). It is aimed at managers, food handlers, trainers and local authorities, and is free of charge.

The DVD uses video scenes of realistic situations in small catering and retail businesses to demonstrate SFBB in action. SFBB was developed specifically for the UK's smaller food businesses to help them comply with new food safety management procedures and may be of interest to some FBOs.

To order a copy of the DVD call FSA Publications on 0845 606 0667, email [foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk](mailto:foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk) or go to [www.food.gov.uk/sfbb](http://www.food.gov.uk/sfbb)



## Step 2 SRM changes – implementation from May

Last July, the FSA Board agreed that the MHS should develop and implement a risk-based audit and inspection regime for SRM controls. A stepped approach to the delivery of the required changes was agreed. The first step, or the first set of changes, was introduced last November. This removed the requirement to apply the MHS personal stamp to sheep, goat and Under Thirty Month (UTM) cattle carcasses and to move to random checks for SRM in imported beef carcasses. A recent internal audit has confirmed that the changes were introduced smoothly.

We now have the go-ahead for the second set of changes. Step 2 changes involve:

- **Moving to an audit-based approach for official controls on the handling of SRM after it has been removed from the carcasses of UTM cattle, sheep and goats, with the frequency reflecting risks.**

The Manual for Official Controls will be updated in May to introduce a risk based decision tool to help MHS staff determine the frequency of these checks.

- **Removal of full-time MHS presence to verify the removal of SRM in UTM cattle, sheep and goats at micro businesses demonstrating high levels of compliance.**

This will allow the MHS to carry out 'cold inspections' in small slaughterhouses which have the facilities to retain viscera and have high levels of compliance. This will offer greater flexibility in MHS attendance. We are currently developing criteria to help Business Managers and Lead Veterinarians work with Food Business Operators to determine the eligibility of slaughterhouses.

Whilst the MHS has a crucial role to play by ensuring the safety of meat produced and the robustness of the controls in place, it remains the Food Business Operator's responsibility to ensure that meat entering the human food chain is free from SRM.

If you have any questions about the Step 2 changes, please get in touch with Craig Kirby ([craig.kirby@mhs.gov.uk](mailto:craig.kirby@mhs.gov.uk)) or Liz Olney ([liz.olney@mhs.gov.uk](mailto:liz.olney@mhs.gov.uk)).



## MHS Extranet and FCI/CCIR

The MHS extranet has now been live for 3 months, giving us a great opportunity to provide our stakeholders with applications and information to support their businesses. Registration continues to grow with over 1000 users, of which FBOs make up 20%.

FBOs who process pigs currently collect their inspection results from the site by way of a printed report. Some FBOs have requested a summary report which details results for the day's kill and for this to be provided in a format which may be easily imported to their own computers for analysis. In response, the MHS has now designed a report which will be released shortly. The report will allow FBOs to analyse the data and identify trends with respect to meat rejections and repeated conditions.

The MHS plans to extend the enhanced reporting service to include other species, beginning with poultry. We anticipate that this will take place in the autumn. Further updates on this project will appear in future editions of Link.

If you would like to find out more about extranet applications and reports please contact Rosie Ripley by emailing [rosie.ripley@mhs.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.ripley@mhs.gov.uk).

## FSA Board backs MHS Transformation (continued from page 1)

“The MHS has demonstrated its willingness to change and its capability and credibility to deliver,” said Steve McGrath, MHS Chief Executive. “What we need now is a period of stability to deliver and we need trust and support. We need all of our stakeholders to be facing in the same direction. As a management team we’re excited about the future and building on the success we’ve had in the last year”. He said that while some in the sector were trying to paint a negative picture, the reality was different: “There are over 134 positions that are no longer in the system now and people are seeing a difference at plant level”.

Continued transformation will be driven through effective management, tough financial targets, continued streamlining and e-enablement of processes, and focussed performance measures and targets.

## Laboratory closures over the end of May Bank Holiday

LGC, VLA (Veterinary Laboratories Agency) and the Scottish Agriculture College (SAC) in Scotland, will be operating restricted hours over the late May Bank Holiday on the 26th May. The following information shows how these arrangements may affect you:

### Cattle TSE & Suspect Animals (Residues in Meat) – LGC

- Results for samples received by the laboratory on Thursday 22 May will be available within normal timescales.
- Results for samples received by the laboratory on Friday 23 May will not be available until Tuesday 27 May.
- Samples will not be accepted between Saturday 24 and Monday 26 May because the laboratory will not reopen for testing until Tuesday 27 May.

### Sheep TSE (Brain Stems) – VLA/SAC

- Results for samples received by the laboratory on Friday 23 May will be available within normal timescales.
- Samples will not be accepted on Monday 26 May because the laboratory will not reopen for testing until Tuesday 27 May.

### Sheep TSE (Dead on Arrival/Dead in Lairage) – VLA/SAC

- Results for heads received by regional laboratories on Thursday 22 May will be available within normal timescales.
- Regional laboratories will not accept or sample heads between Friday 23 and Monday 26 May. Regional laboratories will not be open to accept heads until Tuesday 27 May. Test results will not be available until Wednesday 28 May.

### Trichinella – VLA

- Results for samples received by the laboratory before noon on Friday 24 May will be available within normal timescales.
- Samples received by the laboratory between noon on Friday 24 and 10am on Saturday 25 May will not be tested until Tuesday 27 May when testing and result reporting will resume as normal.

If you have any queries about these arrangements, please contact your OV or SMHI.

## Contact us

We want Link to be a useful and informative publication. Please contact us with any suggestions, comments or ideas for articles. If you would like to receive Link in a different format, please let us know. You can contact us at [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

