

Newsletter No.3 looks particularly at hazards and control measures.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Can meat plant staff do anything to reduce food poisoning? It isn't only other people e.g farmers, butchers and consumers who can take action, **food safety is a shared responsibility from farm to fork.**

Everyone in the food supply chain should:

- Choose their suppliers with care.
- Minimise the spread of bacteria during production.
- Keep the product clean and keep hot foods hot and cold food cold.

Meat plant staff need to:

- Be selective about the animals or meat bought in.
- Minimise the spread of bacteria before, during and after slaughter, dressing and cutting.
- Prevent contamination of meat & maintain temperature controls.

Time is running out

If you want to attend a HACCP Workshop, contact 020 7276 8353 **now** for a place at:

- **27 February @ Bury St Edmunds:** aimed at white meat plant operators.
- **20 March @ Milton Keynes:** support will be provided for Urdu /Punjabi /Hindi speakers.
- **21 March** in Somerset.
- **10 April @ Machynlleth.**

Places are available on a first come basis. (See Newsletter No.2. for costs).

CARCASE TESTING FOR SMALL PLANTS

NFMFT representatives welcomed new Agency guidance on microbiological testing to meet the requirements of the Meat (HACCP) Regulations at the 6 February Stakeholder meeting (see also Newsletter No.1).

Large red meat slaughterhouses must test 5 carcasses every week (or every two weeks if results are satisfactory), but smaller plants will be able to carry out tests less frequently at the OVS's discretion.

The Agency's guidance for OVSs links the frequency of testing to slaughterhouse throughput. Details will be given in Newsletter No.4.

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE At the end of 2002, the MHS were taking enforcement action in 33 large plants in connection with HACCP implementation.

What Are Hazards?

....anything in or on food that could cause harm to the consumer.

Hazards fall into three groups:



These hazards can contaminate your finished product and may occur at any step in your process

The main biological hazards in meat plants are bacteria (e.g. E.coli O157, Salmonella, Campylobacter). *They are carried on the coats and in the guts of healthy animals.* Bacteria can contaminate meat during production.

Bacteria can cause illness, even death, especially in children, the elderly and sick people. *In the 1996 E.coli O157 outbreak in Scotland over 500 people were ill, some had kidney failure and 21 people died.*

Bacteria have great taste! They grow well on high protein, moist foods like meat.



Bacteria multiply very quickly, especially in warm conditions. Although thorough cooking kills most bacteria, temperature controls during storage and distribution are vital.

Before meat is cooked it is often handled by lots of people and the bacteria will spread to other foods that may not be cooked. Butchers have to take precautions, including keeping raw meat and cooked meat and other ready to eat foods separate. They use HACCP principles to help manage the risks and show how they keep food safe.

MEASURES TO CONTROL BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

- Accept only clean animals for slaughter or meat from a reputable slaughterhouse;
- Maintain clean & dirty areas and access controls;
- Maintain good hygiene and cleaning procedures;
- Train staff in good operating practices;
- Avoid contact between hide or skin and meat and prevent gut spillage during evisceration;
- Reduce and maintain low meat temperatures;
- Use clean packaging material and avoid damage;
- Dispose of unfit meat properly; + ?

The Food Standards Agency is running a **Food Hygiene Campaign** to raise awareness of food hygiene issues among catering businesses and the public, to help reduce food poisoning by 20% by 2006.

A GREAT OFFER...

BMF and BMMA have offered small plants their members' advice and experience with HACCP implementation on a "Buddy System" basis. If this could help you, please contact the BMF on 020 7329 0776, or by fax on 020 7329 0653, or by email at sec@britmf.com or the BMMA on 020 7828 1224, or by fax on 020 7828 1237, or by email at louise.riley@bmma.org.uk.