

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the death of an Official Veterinarian on 13th April 2006 at R E Williams & Sons (Wales Region).

Issue

1. To provide an update on the investigation conducted by H.M. Inspector of Health and Safety, Midlands Division and the MHS response to the findings.

Background

2. The contract O.V. was supplied by Hall Mark Meat Hygiene. The plant was issued with an Improvement Notice under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act. Whilst this is subject to the findings at inquest, the HSE have confirmed they do not intend to take any enforcement action against the MHS or the contractor. However, they have made several comments and recommendations:
 - i) Plant specific risk assessments on escaped or fractious animals should be completed. Reliance on a generic risk assessment will not suffice. Consultation with the FBO should form part of the process
 - ii) Since our policy is to rely on plant procedures for dealing with escaped animals, we need to ensure that such procedures are in place, are adequate and are understood by MHS staff.
 - iii) Unless we develop our own procedure, we should take part in the review of arrangements which RE Williams have been asked to conduct within their plant.
 - iv) SMIs and OVs should be sufficiently conversant with local procedures and be able to brief new staff or visitors about escaped animals.
 - v) The site checklist should be amended to include the issue of escaped animals.
 - vi) Training of MHS staff should include the risks associated with escaped or fractious animals.
 - vii) Any training delivered to MHIs or MTs should be controlled in format and content.
 - viii) We should consider making escaped animals a 'near-miss' reportable incident within our IR1 procedures.

3. Action taken by the MHS prior to the HSE completing their investigation:
 - i) A review of 'near-miss' reporting procedures was commenced and these now include escaped animal incidents. The new procedure will be finalised by the end of March 2007 as it forms part of a wider piece of work on incident reporting and investigation.
 - ii) Within the Wales Region a review was commenced at plant level examining the prevalence of risk assessments and written procedures on escaped and fractious animals.
4. Action taken by the MHS since the HSE completed their investigation;
 - i) A working group involving MHS, Contractors and Unison has been established to look at risk assessment, safe systems of work and training on escaped and fractious animals. This group will have finished its work by the end of March 2007.
 - ii) All members of the MHS Meat Industry Forum have received a letter from the Health and Safety Manager soliciting their help in improving standards across the industry.
 - iii) The Wales Region Health and Safety Adviser has attended R E Williams to co-operate in effecting a resolution to the plant-specific problems identified by the HSE.
5. We have committed to provide progress reports to the HSE in February and March. When communicating with the HSE, we have emphasised that this activity will concentrate on the management of escaped animals rather than the elimination of escape incidents. The latter issue is a much greater challenge, the response to which is likely to involve capital outlay by FBOs.

Recommendations

6. MHS Board members are invited to **note** this paper.

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Health and Safety Manager
9 February 2007