

Food Chain information for cattle, sheep and goats - a reminder.

Legislation comes into force on 1 January 2010 requiring slaughterhouse operators to *'request, receive, check and act upon'* food chain information (FCI) for all cattle, sheep and goats sent for slaughter for human consumption.

This requirement forms part of the whole chain - the farm-to-fork approach to food safety introduced by the Hygiene Regulations from the beginning of 2006. FCI has been progressively implemented for the food animal species – poultry (2006); pigs (2008); calves and horses (2009); cattle, sheep and goats (2010).

FCI contributes to slaughterhouse operators' HACCP-based food safety management systems by providing information about animals procured for slaughter. FCI is used by the MHS to aid decisions about meat and may be used to determine inspection procedures for animals and groups of animals.

The FSA has consulted with stakeholders to develop the 'minimum elements of FCI that FBOs must receive. These minimum elements of FCI have been presented in the form of model documents that you can use. Alternatively you can use other means that suit your business needs, including company delivery documents or electronic methods. Similarly, a model document has been produced for animals for which there is relevant information to report, such as signs of conditions that may affect the safety of meat. Provided the minimum elements are provided, the decision about the form in which you wish to receive FCI and the methods for information exchange rests with you.

The FSA has written to industry stakeholders advising of the above changes. A copy of the correspondence and the model documents provided for the minimum requirements of FCI for cattle, sheep and goats and additional information can be found on the FSA website: www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/fciguideance

Ideally FCI should be received before animals arrive at the slaughterhouse, but in many cases this will be impractical, particularly for cattle and sheep procured through livestock markets. In the case of any information that may disrupt the normal operation of the slaughterhouse, suppliers must be advised to provide FCI in good time before the animals arrive.

The OV must be informed of any concerns about the health of the animals that arise after examination of the FCI before ante-mortem inspection. If animals arrive at the slaughterhouse without the FCI.....

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Food Chain information for cattle, sheep and goats (cont.)

.....you must immediately notify the OV: you will need to agree with your OV a system for this. Slaughter may not take place unless the OV permits.

When deciding whether animals can be slaughtered in the absence of FCI, the OV will consider whether their welfare would be compromised if animals are kept in the lairage, and whether your establishment has facilities for the separate storage of carcasses and offal derived from animals slaughtered without this information.

If the OV permits slaughter then the carcasses and offal will not be passed as fit for human consumption and they will remain detained until FCI has been provided. As an exception to this rule, for all species for which FCI becomes a requirement from 1 January 2010 and irrespective of whether the animals are being sent for slaughter direct from the producer or through a market, and only on one occasion per supplier, the OV can permit slaughter and health marking of carcasses even when FCI is not available provided that the ante and post-mortem results are satisfactory.

On the second and subsequent instances of animals arriving from the same producer/market without FCI the rule that the meat cannot be health/ID marked until FCI is provided will be strictly applied.

You should be advising your livestock suppliers now about the above changes and deciding both the information you require and the means by which you wish to receive it.

Amendments to the Meat Industry Guide (MIG)

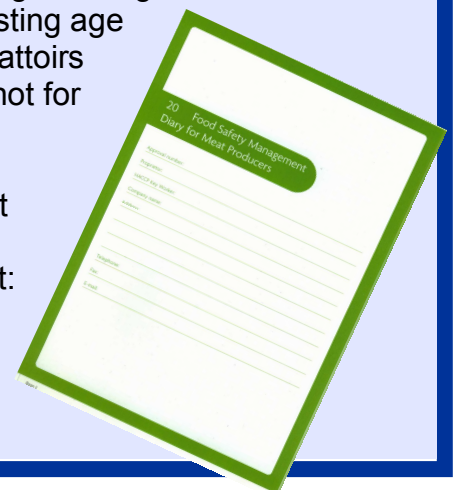
The Meat Industry Guide has been updated. For the first time, the MIG is only being made available in electronic form. Food Business Operators can access this on the FSA website at: www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/guidehygienemeat

The main changes are:

- A new introduction
- Revised Approvals chapter (Part One, Chapter 7) to include the transfer of responsibilities from the Food Standards Agency to the MHS
- Revised Acceptance and Slaughter of Animals chapter (Part Two, Chapter 9) to reflect the implementation of Food Chain Information (FCI) for cattle, sheep and other animals from 1 January 2010
- Revised TSE chapter (Part 3, Chapter 4) to reflect the changes brought in at the beginning of this year following the increase in the BSE testing age from 30 to 48 months and the simplified procedures for abattoirs wishing to slaughter Over Thirty Months (OTM) cattle but not for those over 48 months of age (O48M).

The FSA are in the process of circulating the Food Safety Management Diary. Combined use of the MIG and the Diary can help FBOs achieve compliance with HACCP legal requirements. The Diary can be found at:

www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/foodmandiary2008.pdf



MHS PERFORMANCE TO SEPTEMBER 2009

At the end of the first half of 2009/10, the MHS is on track to achieve our Key Performance Indicators, as detailed in the MHS Plan 2009/10. Our commitment to transform into a more efficient and effective organisation has continued at pace and is delivering positive results. We are on target to reduce our overhead costs, and work on streamlining our corporate service functions is well under way. We are working with FSA to create a new FSA Operations Group with the launch of the new structure by April 2010 and full implementation by 2011.

Our financial position remains good. Gross costs are currently running 3% below budget at £33.5m against the year to date budget of £34.7m. Net costs were below budget by £1m, and year to date we are showing a reduction in overheads of 4.2% from last year. Cost Per Livestock Unit was £11.07, 1.39% below the year to date target of £11.22.

From 28 September 2009 the new time-cost method of charging went live. FBOs will now be charged for the hours of MHS staff at full cost hourly rates but with discounts applied to the charges. The proposed increase in charges is not being introduced at this time. This will mean that, if official control time remains unchanged, FBOs will not face an increase in the charges they pay. Charges could be lower for those businesses where official control time is reduced.

A new system of checks on the accuracy of post-mortem inspection is being piloted in two business areas in November, with a view to introducing a national system by April 2010. As well as providing important feedback to managers at an establishment level, this is also expected to provide high levels of consumer assurance in this core area of work.



The roll-out of Business Agreements to current operational slaughterhouses has been completed. Good progress is being made with agreements for cutting plants. Reviews of agreements at existing establishments will continue on an ongoing basis and a detailed analysis of the impact of introducing Business Agreements is currently underway.

New regulations on the poultry meat marketing standards were due to come into effect in December 2009. However, Defra are now considering a more flexible approach to enforcement. A new implementation date of October 2010 has been proposed.

The MHS has introduced a standardised process for assessing the suitability of poultry slaughterhouses to implement PIA systems. This replaces localised arrangements that were previously in place. Lead Veterinarians will complete assessments for those FBOs wishing to move to a PIA system, in consultation with the slaughterhouse OV. Where requirements are met, trained and authorised PIAs may then be permitted to carry out official control duties.

As part of the drive to improve service delivery, the MHS have assumed responsibility for future applications for the approval of meat establishments. Excluding the initial approvals exercise, the MHS now has responsibility for granting, reviewing, suspending and withdrawing approvals throughout GB, and for ensuring the consistency of approvals delivery throughout the UK.

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MHS PERFORMANCE TO SEPTEMBER 2009 (cont)

Three Over Thirty Month (OTM)/ Over 48 Month (O48M) breaches were reported from 1,016,269 bovines processed during the first 6 months of 2009/10, representing a compliance rate of 99.999997%. Two O48M bovines and one OTM breach (where three bovines born in Estonia - but slaughtered in the UK) occurred and were not tested for BSE prior to being released into the human food chain. Two SRM breaches (one of which involved one of the two O48M bovines reported above) were also reported during the same period, representing a compliance rate of 99.999998%. One SRM breach occurred when the vertebral column of an OTM bovine was not removed and the other occurred where a segment of spinal cord was not removed prior to despatch to an OTM cutting plant where it was detected before release into the human food chain. Despite these breaches, extremely high levels of compliance are being maintained.

There has been a significant reduction in the number of days lost due to work related injuries and ill health. If this trend continues, MHS is looking towards a reduction of around 75% over the three year period of the Health and Safety Strategy, well over the target of 20%. The MHS is also continuing to make progress with reducing levels of sickness absence – although average year to date data as at September showed 11.2 days lost per person which is above the target of 10.4 - sickness levels are on a downward trend.

Whilst we are pleased that performance for the first half of 2009/10 is on track to meet its Key Performance Indicators, we are not complacent and are continuing to work with stakeholders to meet or better our targets.

Time-based invoices

The first invoices for the new time-based charging system were issued in November and they already include backing information. The information supplied provides a summary for the charging period of MHS chargeable time spent at a premises but some operators have requested more detailed information broken down day by day.

Any operator who would like to receive an automated weekly report of this data should send an email to Revenue.Accounting@mhs.gov.uk confirming the approval number, the name of the premises and the email address to which the report should be sent. Reports will be issued on the Friday following the end of the previous week. For example, a report for the week ending 31 January 2010 would be issued on 5 February 2010.



The new system will go live on 8 January 2010 with the weekly data report service being made available from this date.

Increase to the cost of a slaughterer's licence

All Food Business Operators should have received a joint letter from the MHS and Defra in November notifying them of a proposed increase to the costs of a slaughterer's licence. No comments were received and therefore, as of 1 January 2010, the cost of applying for a new (full) slaughterer's licence will be £26 (currently £20) and the cost of making an amendment to an existing full licence will be £7 (currently £5).

To take advantage of the **current rates**, applications must be received by the MHS by 31 December 2009. All such applications must be accompanied by a cheque or postal order for £20/£5. Applications received from 1 January 2010 must be accompanied by a cheque or postal order for £26/ £7 or they will be returned. Please send applications to the Delivery Unit, Meat Hygiene Service, Kings Pool, Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PR. If you have any queries, please contact the Delivery Unit on 01904 455 495 or email delivery.team@mhs.gov.uk

Christmas and New Year sampling arrangements

LGC and VLA (Veterinary Laboratories Agency) will be operating restricted hours over the Christmas and New Year period and these arrangements may affect you.

Cattle TSE and Suspect Animals (Residues in Meat) – LGC

- ◆ Results for samples received by the laboratory on Wednesday 23 December will be available within normal timescales.
- ◆ Samples will not be accepted between Thursday 24 and Monday 28 December.
- ◆ Results for samples received by the laboratory between Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 December will be available within normal timescales.
- ◆ Samples will not be accepted between Thursday 31 December 2009 and Sunday 3 January 2010. The laboratory will not be open for testing until Monday 4 January.

Sheep TSE (Brain Stems and Dead on Arrival/Dead in Lairage) - VLA

- ◆ Brain stem sampling for the 2009 survey has finished and the 2010 survey begins Monday 4 January 2010.
- ◆ DoA/DiL sampling is suspended until further notice.

Trichinella - VLA

- ◆ Sample submission and reporting arrangements remain unchanged up to and including Thursday 24 December (before noon).
- ◆ Samples will not be accepted between Friday 25 and Monday 28 December.
- ◆ Samples will be accepted from Tuesday 29 and up to Thursday 31 December (before noon).
- ◆ The laboratory will be closed on Friday 1 January but can accept samples on Saturday 2 January 2010 by prior arrangement only.
- ◆ Normal service resumes on the Monday 4 January 2010.

Campylobacter - VLA

- ◆ Testing services continue as normal.

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

Information correct at 9 December 2009.

Merry Christmas to all our readers

We wish all Food Business Operators a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2010.

Please continue to write to the Communications Team with 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 or call 01904 455558.

MHS Communications.



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

