

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

**FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY STRATEGY FOR THE CONTROL OF
CAMPYLOBACTER IN CHICKENS**

The attached paper has been provided by the Food Standards Agency, for the information of Members, and reports progress on the Agency's strategy for the control of *Campylobacter* in chickens.

**Secretariat
November 2003**

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY STRATEGY FOR THE CONTROL OF *CAMPYLOBACTER* IN CHICKENS

Introduction

1. The Food Standards Agency strategy for controlling *Campylobacter* in chickens was issued for consultation on 17th June 2003 and the relevant documentation presented to the ACMSF, for information, at its June 2003 meeting (ACM/648). The aim of the consultation was to distribute the strategy widely to all stakeholders in the poultry production chain and seek views to assist in its implementation and further development. The consultation has now closed and views were received from a wide range of stakeholders, including some from overseas. The Agency's response to the comments made during the consultation will be issued on its web site in due course.

2. Given the Agency's priority for reducing the number of food poisoning cases associated with *Campylobacter* as it works towards its foodborne disease target, and the evidence to suggest chicken is the biggest source of *Campylobacter* entering the kitchen, the Agency began implementing the strategy immediately. Stakeholders had been heavily involved throughout the development of the strategy and had already indicated support for the planned approaches. Work has focussed on the development of the campaign to improve biosecurity on the broiler farm and this paper outlines progress to date.

The Biosecurity Campaign

3. The preparatory work for the Agency's *Campylobacter* strategy indicated that while biosecurity standards across the poultry industry were generally high, the most basic biosecurity measures were not always followed on many farms. The focus of the strategy is therefore a campaign to improve biosecurity on the broiler farm as a foundation for future, more specific controls on *Campylobacter*. The first phase of the campaign is a direct mailing to farmers, highlighting the main biosecurity messages and this will be followed by two further phases which will provide more detailed information on best practice for biosecurity and *Campylobacter* measures respectively.

4. There is already a wealth of information on general biosecurity measures, and the intention is not to replace guidance such as that provided in the *Defra Code of Practice for the Prevention and Control of Salmonella in chickens Reared for Meat on Farm* or by the industry. The campaign aims to remind farmers what should be done and that biosecurity measures need to be implemented properly at all times.

5. The relevant stakeholders were consulted during the development of the campaign, with initial contact made with farmers through a telephone survey. A number of advertising agencies were asked to develop material for the campaign based on information received from the survey. Four potential designs were selected and presented to farmer focus groups which expanded

the audience beyond those in the initial survey. Feedback from the focus groups was used to select a leaflet and poster with the banner 'Cleaner Farms Better Flocks' and input from other major stakeholders confirmed the selected material is appropriate. The text, based on the Defra Code of Practice and work carried out by the Agency as it developed the *Campylobacter* strategy, was also prepared in conjunction with major stakeholders.

The Launch

6. The Agency plans to launch the campaign in January 2004.

The next steps

7. Activities over the coming months will focus on three main areas:
- Evaluation of the consultation responses and a review of the strategy in light of the responses.
 - Development of a mechanism to deliver Phase 2 of the biosecurity campaign. The strategy indicates this is likely to be through technical workshops or seminars, but the Agency plans to work closely with stakeholders and to use information arising from the focus groups and input from stakeholders during the development of Phase 1 to identify an appropriate mechanism.
 - The Agency's research programme on *Campylobacter* in poultry will be reviewed on 13th January 2004. The outputs from this review will be used to help develop the future research programme. ACMSF Members are asked to let the Secretariat know as soon as possible if they would like to receive an invitation to attend the review.

Microbiological Safety Division

Food Standards Agency

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