

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

DISCUSSION PAPER

INCREASED INCIDENCE OF LISTERIOSIS IN THE UK

1. In September 2005, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) alerted ACMSF Members to a change in the epidemiology of human *L. monocytogenes* infection in England and Wales. This change was characterised by a doubling in reported cases since 2001, and could not be explained by outbreaks recognised during this time.
2. In Scotland in 2005 the incidence was also significantly higher than in 2004 and from the period 1993 to 1999. A lower increasing incidence was also reported in Northern Ireland. In all countries the disease occurred predominantly in older patients with bacteraemia in the absence of CNS infection.
3. HPA confirmed that the increase in listeriosis continued into 2007. Similar increases had also been reported in other European countries, including France and Germany.
4. In June 2007 ACMSF referred this issue to its *Ad Hoc* Group on Vulnerable Groups for consideration as a priority. The Group met on six occasions over a period of 16 months to consider a series of hypotheses to examine the cause of the rise in listeriosis to inform the development of ACMSF advice to the Food Standards Agency. The Committee received an interim report on the Group's deliberations in June 2008.
5. Professor Humphrey (Chair, *Ad Hoc* Group on Vulnerable Groups) will introduce the attached draft final report that the Group has produced. Members are invited to comment on the report.

Secretariat
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