

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

INFORMATION PAPER

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE AND THE FOOD CHAIN

The Food Standards Agency held a meeting with interested parties on 29 November 2007 to discuss key issues concerning antimicrobial (antibiotic) resistance in bacteria and the role that the food chain may play in this phenomenon. The meeting included presentations from expert speakers on topics including:

- antimicrobial resistance in foodborne zoonotic pathogens and commensals
- antimicrobial use and resistance issues in food animal production
- antimicrobial use and resistance issues in humans
- transmission pathways of bacteria resistant to antimicrobials
- emerging issues such as extended spectrum beta-lactamase producing *E. coli* and meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

These were followed by a discussion forum to obtain stakeholder views on consumer issues, risk assessment, international issues (such as imported food/feed) and the role of the FSA.

Delegates highlighted a range of issues that they felt to be important. These included:

- The need to assess the degree of antimicrobial resistance in the foodchain, including foods on retail sale. It was suggested that there should be a greater emphasis on screening for antimicrobial resistance in non-pathogenic bacteria as these organisms are more abundant than pathogens.
- Imported foods and animal feeds were felt to be an important area for investigation as these may play a role in the introduction of new antimicrobial resistant bacteria or resistance genes.
- There was a general view that there is a further need to look at systems of food production (animal husbandry), particularly antimicrobial use, and although this responsibility falls under Defra's remit delegates felt that it was important that the FSA should be involved in this process.

The full report of the meeting was published on 17 August 2009 and it can be accessed at the following link:

www.food.gov.uk/safereating/microbiology/antimicrobialresistance

**Secretariat
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