

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF
FOOD**

INFORMATION PAPER

Campylobacter Risk Management Programme

This paper provides a summary of developments since a revised strategic approach to *Campylobacter* reduction was published in September 2013, and current plans for its future development and implementation.

Board Update: March 2014

1. An update was presented to the Board in March 2014 on what activities had been carried out since the last Board meeting and what was expected in the future (<http://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/our-board/board-meetings/>). This was well received and another update is expected in September 2014.

EU Poultry Meat inspection proposals

2. A technical workshop was held in May 2014 on the EC proposals on future poultrymeat inspection, including a possible process hygiene criterion for *Campylobacter* on chicken. As well as Government departments, a number of stakeholders attended the meeting. As yet, there have been no indications about the details of these proposals or when the proposals can be expected, which are unlikely before autumn 2014. It is thought likely that proposals will include a PHC and may also include a proposal to approve the use of peroxyacetic acid, which received a reasonably favourable opinion from EFSA in March. DG SANCO has sought MS and stakeholder views on attitudes to possible Campy control measures via a questionnaire: we await feedback on its findings.

ASE Event: 3-4 June 2014

3. As part of its renewed strategic approach to the reduction of *Campylobacter* in UK chicken, the FSA held an event on 3-4 June to bring together more than 90 representatives from retailers and producers, as well as from consumer, enforcement, regulatory and research bodies, to identify potential solutions and agree responsibilities for taking actions forward.
4. This event was facilitated by Capgemini using their 'accelerated solutions environment' methodology, which has been used successfully by a wide range of businesses to address complex problems that cut across different areas of responsibility within their business.
5. The aim of the event was to review evidence on *Campylobacter* reduction interventions, come to a view on which are worthy of further investigation

and who will be responsible for taking them forward to what timescale. Attendees prioritised potential interventions for their impact by the end of 2015 and the feasibility and each stakeholder organisation was asked to develop proposals for short-term action that was to be considered further by their organisation.

Retail Survey

6. A 12 month UK survey of contamination levels on whole chickens at retail, based on market share, started in mid-Feb 2014 and we expect the first quarterly results to be available for publication during July. This is a part of our new strategic approach, for more information to be made available, as endorsed by our Board in Sept 2013.

Food Safety Week

7. The theme for Food Safety Week 2014 (16-21 June) is 'Don't Wash Raw Chicken' (as it is likely to spread contamination and thorough cooking will kill it). This will be used by the FSA and partners to raise awareness of Campylobacter food poisoning, supported by resources including a poster and leaflet, toolkit to facilitate delivery of local events, and related activity in PR and social media content (www.food.gov.uk/chicken).

Communications Working Group

8. The FSA has also established a Communications Working Group to coordinate consumer facing messaging with UK retailers, including the clarity and consistency of on-pack advice and utilising existing retailers' proprietary channels to communicate with consumers, e.g. websites, magazines, in-store activity.

International

US Study Trip

9. An FSA representative participated in a study visit to the US in February 2014, which included participation at a Poultry Safety Summit organised by Walmart. In the US, Salmonella remains the priority, but Campylobacter is starting to be addressed, albeit currently at a lower level of intensity. USDA monitoring of Campylobacter is in progress and is indicating that many plants do not meet the suggested presence /absence performance standards. The results have not been published as USDA is currently considering the data.
10. For one supply chain, all birds arriving at the slaughterhouse were positive for Campylobacter and Salmonella. Antimicrobial treatments are extensively used in slaughterhouses resulting in Salmonella free chilled whole birds and around 40% prevalence for Campylobacter. However, following cutting into portions the Salmonella prevalence is 25%. There was a high level of

concern about consumer confidence due to numerous Salmonella outbreaks and associated negative press. There is a USDA requirement for on-pack labelling of safety messages to an agreed format. A large food bag for placing raw poultry in and printed with safety messages was available above the retail shelf in Walmart store.

Iceland

11. A presentation was given to the JWG by a veterinary officer from the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority. Iceland had previously had a large rise in Campylobacter cases and the presentation detailed what measures had been put in place in order to decrease the burden on human health. A strong emphasis had been placed on behaviour change and on educating both industry and consumers.

Netherlands

12. FSA officials visited counterparts in the Netherlands in March 2014. The Dutch approach has concentrated in the development of a Process Hygiene Criterion (PHC) that will be part of the retailers' specification for their suppliers. Is all based on cooperation and good will by the industry as the Dutch authorities will have no legal basis to enforce it if a slaughterhouse fails the PHC and fails to take action. It will be between the slaughterhouse and the retailer to agree what to do.

13. The development of the PHC has been a well thought exercise and we will replicate their model with UK data because this will prepare us better for future EU negotiations related to Campy and changes to poultry meat controls.

- Process Hygiene Criterion (PHC)

14. The sampling frame is for slaughterhouses to test 5 breast skin samples post-chill and one sample of caeca (10 caeca pooled) from one flock once a week.

15. Results assessed against criteria as follows:

- $n=5$, $c=3$, $M=10\ 000$, $m=1\ 000$
- N (samples taken) =5,
- c (no. that can exceed m) =3,
- M (max limit) =10 000 cfu/g,
- m (threshold level) =1 000
- which means that "we sample each batch, take five samples, none of these may exceed 10 000 cfu/g and up to three may exceed 1 000 cfu/g"

16. Repeated exceedence requires action to be taken to improve results – to meet the criterion or at least to be seen to be doing their best to do so through an improvement plan. Only implemented on 1 March 2014 so early days yet.

17. PHC is implemented through agreement with the Dutch retail trade association, such that it forms a requirement of their buying specification, that meat must come from a compliant supplier, whether the meat is from Dutch or other sources. This avoids it being a unilateral statutory measure which wouldn't be possible within the EU.
18. Dutch consumers have low awareness of Campy – more aware of residues etc. in food. 50% of the Dutch market needs are sourced from Dutch slaughterhouses, which means 50% are not.
 - RIVM (Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment)
19. RIVM has noted a close association between case trends and prescriptions for PPIs (proton pump inhibitors); impact is lower with older people, where stomach acid barrier is already less effective.
20. Presented approach to assessment of risk and cost-benefit demonstrates (with their data) that PHC at 1000 cfu/g would be cost effective and that a lower PHC or tolerance for positives should yield a greater health benefit.
21. It was agreed to maintain links in the future.

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