

For Steve Wearne -

## FSA, POULTRY AND RETAIL CE's CAMPYLOBACTER SUMMIT

The story so far:-

- A survey was carried out by the FSA of Campylobacter in chicken on retail sale in the UK between May 2007 and September 2008. It reported that Campylobacter was present in 65% of the fresh chicken samples tested. This led to significant media coverage, making the front pages of a number of National newspapers.
- In March 2010, an 'International meeting on Campylobacter reduction in chicken' was held. This conference was attended by the FSA, other Government departments, scientists and the EU Commission. It was also attended by individuals from countries that were already involved in Campylobacter reduction programmes.
- In July 2010, the FSA, BBSRC and Defra produced the 'UK Research and Innovation Strategy for Campylobacter –in the food chain, 2010 – 2015'. It was produced to identify how funders could work together in a co-ordinated approach to tackling the complex research issues needed to address the significant issue of Campylobacter in the food chain. It also provided researchers and industry with a clear list of research priorities in order to focus and stimulate their efforts around common structured goals.
- Following this publication, the first research calls for Campylobacter research were made in the same month, with new research expected to start at the beginning of 2011.
- In 2010, the FSA made tackling foodborne disease using a targeted approach, giving particular priority to Campylobacter on poultry, a strategic objective for the 2010-2015 FSA strategy.
- A Campylobacter risk management programme (CRMP) was set up in order to reduce levels of Campylobacter in chicken. The programme encompasses a range of projects targeted at different points across the food chain, from farm to fork.
- In 2009, the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Campylobacter was established which would enable all relevant parties (FSA, Defra, BPC, BRC, NFU, food manufacturers, processors and retailers) the opportunity to work in partnership/collaboration. The key aim of this group has been to work together to identify and facilitate the development and implementation of effective interventions or measures across the poultry chain that significantly reduces the levels of Campylobacter contamination on UK-produced chicken. The JWG has also allowed for discussion in relation to industry activity and progress on the action plan. These meetings are held quarterly.
- Government interest in Campylobacter is coordinated through a cross-government Campylobacter working group (which includes DH, PHE and

Defra) and further developments will be coordinated with health and agriculture departments through FSA offices in the devolved UK countries.

- In December 2010, a target to reduce levels of Campylobacter in UK-produced fresh chicken was agreed with industry and published. The target was considered achievable, with the aim to reduce the percentage of the most heavily contaminated chickens, with more than 1000 colony forming units per gram of chicken (cfu/g) at the end of the slaughter process (post chill), from 27% in 2008 to 19% by 2013, and to 10% by 2015. The reduction target by 2013 was expected to be heavily influenced by improved biosecurity. The reduction target by 2015 was expected to be heavily influenced by implementation of effective processing interventions.
- In 2012, the FSA commenced with an independent monitoring programme which involved taking samples from chicken carcasses at end of slaughter. The monitoring data (over a 12 month period), has shown that no progress has yet been made in reducing levels of Campylobacter in chicken. This monitoring is on-going.
- Note that there have been a number of interventions implemented to date. This has included:
  - improving on-farm management practices (implementing biosecurity).
  - improving the evisceration process at Slaughterhouse
  - improving packaging of fresh chicken at retail
  - increasing the number of messages on food handling, cooking and cross-contamination.
- Acknowledge the contribution of industry partners so far, which is appreciated. Unfortunately there has been no difference in a reduction of Campylobacter levels, hence the reason for refreshing this FSA strategy.
- Between April 2009 and March 2013 the FSA **has spent c£3.5M** in research related to Campylobacter.
- Currently there are 23 active Campylobacter related research projects being undertaken by the FSA (this includes both individual and co-funded research (with Defra and/or BBSRC). The total FSA contribution to these projects, by the time they have all been completed, will be **c£5.3M** (plus the potential spend of £3M over 4-5 years on molecular surveillance).