Modernisation of meat inspection in poultry in the EU
Outline

• Meat inspection mandate
• Public health hazards in poultry meat inspection
  – Biological hazards
• Impact of proposed changes on animal health and welfare
• Technical Reports defining harmonised epidemiological criteria
Meat Inspection mandate

• Annex 1:
  – Addressing biological and chemical hazards, as well as the potential impact on animal health and welfare of any proposed changes to meat inspection
  – EFSA asked the BIOHAZ, CONTAM and AHAW Panels to deliver these Scientific Opinions
  – Each Panel has set up *ad hoc* working groups (WG) to assist developing the draft Opinions
  – An overarching WG has coordinated the work

• Annex 2:
  – EFSA asked the Biological Monitoring Unit to deliver the Technical Reports defining harmonised epidemiological criteria
## Progress overview delivering the Opinions

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<th>Species</th>
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<td>September 2011</td>
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<td>Poultry</td>
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<td>Bovine/Small Ruminants</td>
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Meat inspection
Terms of reference for the
SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS
Terms of reference

• **Identify and rank the main risks for public health (PH) that should be addressed by meat inspection at EU level.**

• **Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current meat inspection methodology and recommend possible alternative methods, taking into account implications for animal health and welfare.**

• **Recommend additional inspection methods in case other previously not considered hazards have been identified above (e.g. salmonellosis, campylobacteriosis).**

• **Recommend possible alternative methods and adaptations of inspection methods and/or frequencies of inspections that provide an equivalent level of protection within the scope of meat inspection or elsewhere in the production chain that may be used by risk managers in case they consider the current methods disproportionate to the risk.**
  - e.g. based on the risks or on data obtained using harmonised epidemiological criteria. When appropriate, food chain information should be taken into account.
Terms of reference: Scope

• Issues outside the scope of the mandate:
  – Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs)
  – Issues other than those of PH significance that compromise fitness of meat for human consumption (e.g. sexual odour)
  – Impact of changes to meat inspection procedures on occupational health of abattoir workers, inspectors, etc
  – The definition of the responsibilities of the different actors (official veterinarians, official auxiliaries, staff of food business operators) is excluded from this mandate
Opinion on meat inspection of POULTRY
Approach taken by BIOHAZ Panel

• Hazards from scientific literature were ranked qualitatively using a decision tree, based on:
  – incidence and severity in humans,
  – prevalence in carcasses,
  – source attribution of human cases to poultry meat

→ Resulting in a shortlist of hazards

• Following an assessment of current methods of meat inspection, alternatives / improvements were recommended
  – Including how to address hazards not covered by current methods:
    • At farm level
    • During processing at abattoir, if possible
Decision tree for risk ranking

1 Risk of infection through handling, preparation or consumption of poultry meat.
2 Current controls: any hazard-specific control measures implemented at farm and/or slaughterhouse level before chilling of the carcasses.
To identify and rank the main risks for public health

Results of the qualitative risk assessment:

- **Salmonella spp.** HIGH relevance
- **Campylobacter spp.** HIGH relevance
- **ESBL/AmpC\(^1\) (E. coli)** MEDIUM to HIGH relevance
- **ESBL/AmpC\(^1\) (Salmonella)** LOW to MEDIUM relevance

\(^1\) Bacteria carrying extended spectrum \(\beta\)-lactamase /AmpC genes
To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current meat inspection system

Strengths

*Ante-mortem* inspection enables:
Food chain information (FCI) provides information on disease occurrence and veterinary treatments, enabling a focused inspection on flocks with problems.
Verification of FCI and provision of feedback to producers
Detection of birds heavily contaminated with faeces.

*Post-mortem* inspection enables:
Visual detection of faecal contamination of carcasses, which can be an indicator of slaughter hygiene.

Weaknesses

Current *ante-* or *post-mortem* visual inspection are not able to detect any of the public health hazards identified as the main concerns for food safety
The high speed of the slaughter lines reduces the sensitivity of detection of lesions or carcass contamination by visual inspection
Recommend inspection methods fit for new hazards currently not covered by the meat inspection system

• The only way to ensure effective control of the hazards of relevance identified is to establish:

A comprehensive food safety assurance for poultry meat, combining measures applied on-farm and at-abattoir

• A prerequisite for this system is setting targets for these hazards to be achieved on carcasses. Targets in primary production can be considered if effective intervention methods at the farm level exist.

• These clear and measurable targets would indicate what food business operators (FBOs) should achieve in respect to a particular hazard.

• To meet these targets, a variety of control options for the main hazards are available, at both farm and abattoir level. These measures have been described and assessed in earlier EFSA opinions.
This integrated food safety assurance system for poultry meat would:

- allow risk categorisation of flocks based on FCI;
- enable classification of abattoirs according to their capability to prevent or reduce faecal contamination of carcasses, based on:
  - the technologies applied including installed equipment and the hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) programmes in place, and/or
  - on the process hygiene, measured by the establishment of Process Hygiene Criteria (PHC).
    - for example the level of indicator organisms such as *E. coli* or *Enterobacteriaceae* on the carcasses.
**Recommend adaptations of current methods**

- FCI could be used for risk categorisation of flocks/batches. To achieve this, the system needs further development to include additional food safety information, e.g. appropriate indicators for the main public health hazards.

- *Ante-mortem* inspection can help to detect birds heavily contaminated with faeces and to assess the general health status of the flock, therefore no adaptations to the existing *ante-mortem* inspection are found to be required.

- It is proposed that the current *post-mortem* visual inspection is replaced by setting targets for the main hazards on the carcass and by verification of the FBO’s own hygiene management through the use of PHC.
  - It is noted however, that current routine *post-mortem* inspection does not increase the microbiological risk to public health.

- Elimination of abnormalities on aesthetic/meat quality grounds can be ensured through meat quality assurance systems.
• Members of the BIOHAZ Panel and Unit,
• Experts of its Working groups
• EFSA staff who contributed to this opinion.
ANY QUESTIONS?

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!
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