

Business Directors for the MHS

One of the key changes to the remodelled MHS operational management structure is the appointment of two Business Directors, one each in the North and South of the UK. They will lead the operational delivery of MHS core business services, continue delivering significant reductions in MHS costs over the next five years and liaise with industry stakeholders at a national level to drive continuous business improvement.

We are very pleased to announce that Peter Styler has been appointed as the Business Director for the southern half of the country. Peter has taken over the line management of 6 Business Managers and has plans to introduce himself to as many industry representatives and Food Business Operators as possible over the coming months.



Peter Styler
Business Director (South)

Stakeholder engagement and partnership working have been a particular focus during Peter's career. As HM Customs and Excise Regional External Partnership Manager in southern England, he initiated a number of mutually beneficial projects working with a variety of organisations and stakeholders both within and outside the civil service. More recently, his role as Partnership Project Manager has required the successful development of strong relationships across a range of government, private and voluntary sector organisations.

The MHS is currently recruiting for the position of Business Director (North). The two Business Directors will be members of the MHS Senior Management Team, reporting directly to the Chief Executive.

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Optimisation project update

A successful Project Board meeting took place on Monday 22nd September. The final report from the Project Board will be submitted to the Advisory Body on 29th September. Through future issues of Link, we will keep you updated on how the FSA, Defra, industry and the MHS will work together to deliver action in response to the recommendations in the final report.

You will be able to see a copy of the report by accessing the FSA's website:
www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/industrycommittees/abdoc/meetingsabdoc/

Rollout of Business Agreement commences in Scotland

A joint MHS/ Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW) workshop was held in the Perth Huntingtower Hotel last week to update Food Business Operators on the new Business Agreement (BA). The event was well attended by industry and provided MHS management with an excellent opportunity to explain the mechanics of the new document, to outline the process to be completed and to give FBOs the opportunity to ask questions.

MHS Business Manager Ian McWatt confirmed, "A considerable amount of work has been undertaken between industry representatives and the MHS over recent months to finalise the Business Agreement format. The workshop demonstrated what can be achieved with MHS and industry working together".

The Business Agreement extends the provisions of the Operational Hours Agreement and creates a framework through which individual Food Business Operators can agree the level of attendance by the MHS. During the workshop, Ian McWatt delivered a presentation outlining the scope of the Business Agreement. "The intention behind this new format is to allow the MHS to better plan future service delivery, to be more transparent in terms of how we manage deployment and to provide industry with a greater degree of clarity in relation to the tasks the MHS is required to undertake".

The BA rollout commences in Scotland followed soon after by a phased approach across England and Wales. Similar workshop sessions will be held with BMPA and other industry representatives. Should you have any questions regarding the Business Agreement, please contact your local Business Manager or David Lowe, BA Project Lead: david.lowe@mhs.gov.uk

Working in partnership

Last year EBLEX contacted the MHS to see if we could work jointly with EBLEX, industry and the FSA to explore the possibilities for improving the value of red offals from sheep and particularly cattle, for the export market. The perception was that knife damage arising during the dressing or inspection of these offals rendered them low-value or unmarketable within this potentially valuable market.



Selection of red offals.

A joint project which included a very informative fact-finding mission to Rungis Market in Paris resulted in the MHS, with full FSA support, presenting offal inspection guidance at three EBLEX hosted seminars this year, specifically addressing the issue of inspection and subsequent realisation of product specification for export. We were delighted with the interest shown at these seminars and are extremely pleased to hear that as a result several plants are now enjoying red offal exports of bovine livers and cheek muscle into Europe where they had not previously met the market requirements. Dr Phil Hadley,

Regional Manager at Eblex Ltd said: "As a result of the approach developed by the MHS earlier this year to the inspection of offals, EBLEX is delighted to report that this has specifically opened up new opportunities for English companies, a growing number of whom are now actively exporting into European markets offering a highly regarded, quality product. This is an excellent example of a changing MHS working in partnership and responding well to the practical needs of the industry and is recognised and welcomed by EBLEX and industry alike".

A representative of Alec Jarrett Ltd said "We would like to acknowledge the improvement in knife use during offal inspection. This has in turn given us a product which is acceptable in Europe and has been exported due to the now minimal cutting into the liver and less cutting into the middle of the cheek, all of which is improving the meat's value". The MHS team are grateful to all those who were involved in the project which has clearly demonstrated the benefits of working in partnership.



MHS performance update

The MHS has continued to use the Balanced Scorecard approach to manage performance for 2008/09. The Balanced Scorecard translates our five Corporate Objectives into high level indicators and targets. This allows the MHS Senior Management Team and MHS Board to focus on those areas that have been identified as key measures of our performance.

At the end of the first quarter of 2008/09, MHS performance was on track to achieve our Corporate Objectives, as detailed in the MHS Corporate Business Plan 2008/09-2010/11.

The MHS is continuing to significantly reduce costs. Our financial position is strong, with both net and gross costs currently below budget. The Cost Per Livestock Unit (CPLU) is substantially below target at £10.79 against the target of £12.84.

There has been one SRM breach to date which occurred in June.

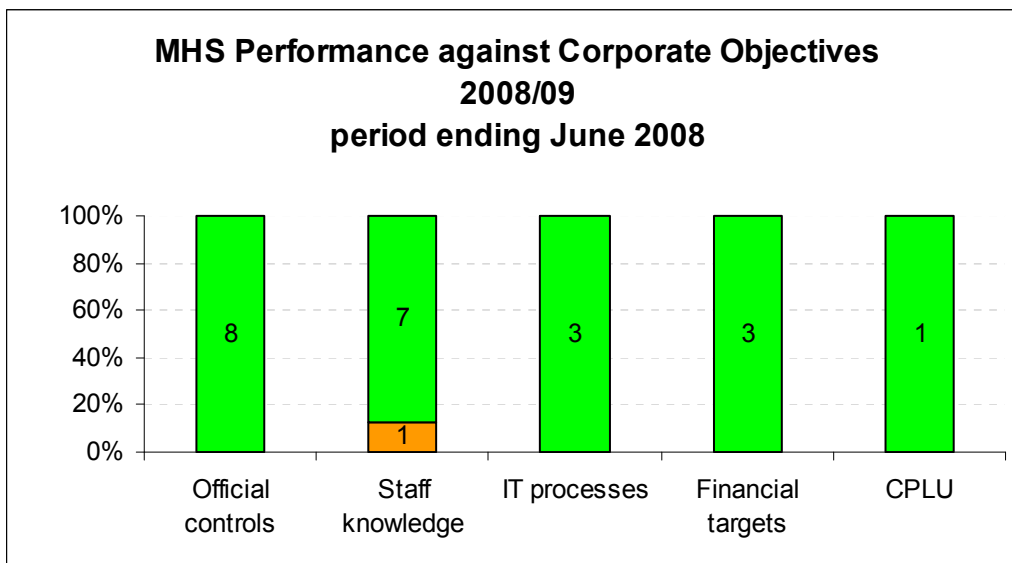
Progress is being made towards moving to risk based controls. A new initiative has recently been launched which will determine the possibility of allowing cold inspection in red meat slaughterhouses. FBOs need to have the necessary systems in place to ensure meat entering the human food chain is free from SRM.

Performance data shows that MHS sickness levels have continued to decline over the past year. However, the MHS is committed to reducing absences still further and has recently appointed an interim HR Manager to focus solely on attendance issues.

The Equality targets for gender, disability and ethnicity are currently not being met (under 'Staff knowledge') but due to the MHS currently recruiting very few staff, there are few opportunities to address this.

Whilst we are pleased that performance for the first quarter shows that the MHS is on track to meet its five objectives, we are not complacent and are continuing to work with stakeholders to meet or better, transformation targets.

In July the MHS was successfully reaccredited with the ISO 9001:2000 standard which certifies that our management systems and processes meet the international quality standard.



Nb: the numbers which appear in the columns indicate the number of corporate indicators which feed into the MHS's five corporate objectives.

IT in licensed premises

A meeting with a representative of the British Meat Processors Association (BMPA) took place on 9 September to discuss a MHS / FBO collaborative approach to IT in slaughterhouses. There will be another meeting with additional stakeholders to discuss a similar partnership approach in Scotland.

Areas being considered for joint working include the exchange of information between the MHS and FBOs such as ante/ post mortem data and animal identification data.

Contracting in remote areas

MHS staff can reasonably expect to deal with a few red deer in the course of their work but a porpoise, several grey seals and dozens of puffins are not the sort of livestock we usually come across. However that's just what Linda Barnes and Archie Drummond encountered when they went to meet our more remote approved suppliers.

The OV Contract Working Group has been working for some months to pull together the new contract and to establish a group of approved suppliers to deliver those services after a tendering exercise which is now underway. While most of the new contracts will be delivered on the basis of the 37 clusters established, provision has been made to allow the possibility of continuing to provide a more local service in the Scottish islands. This is believed to be an economically sensible arrangement that reflects the unique circumstances of low throughput plants operating in remote locations, often at the end of a long ferry trip. The proposal has the support of key stakeholders.



On the island of Stornoway. From L-R: Hector Low, OV; Linda Barnes, MHS National Procurement Manager; Archie Drummond, MHS Business Manager.

Following submission and assessment of the suppliers' pre-qualification questionnaire, the approved suppliers were invited to a bidders' conference in York in early July. Recognising that cluster and LV issues would dominate this conference, the MHS decided that a tailored presentation would be more helpful to the island suppliers and that we should take the presentation to them. So, that's exactly what we did. Linda and Archie had meetings with our local approved suppliers in Whitburn, Shetland, Arran, North Uist, Harris and Tiree. With considerable distances covered, including flights in very small aircraft and several ferry crossings, it was a whistle-stop tour with no time to whistle. However, our efforts were very much appreciated by our remote suppliers so it was time very well spent.

The approval of catering butchers as cutting plants

The European Union (EU) Food Hygiene legislation that came into operation on 1 January 2006 introduced a major change as far as catering butchers are concerned. Whereas the definition of "*final consumer*" in the previous Regulations included caterers, the definition in the new Regulations does not: "*final consumer*" is now defined as "*the ultimate consumer of a foodstuff who will not use the food as part of any food business operation or activity*", i.e. the public. This means that establishments supplying caterers are now considered to be supplying other establishments as opposed to supplying the final consumer.

Subject to certain exemptions, the Regulations require establishments in England which cut meat for supply to other establishments to be approved as cutting plants by the Food Standards Agency. The delivery of official controls in these establishments will move from local authorities to the Meat Hygiene Service once approvals have been granted.

Operational support in the MHS

As reported previously in Link, all processes previously dealt with by our regional offices are now handled centrally in York headquarters. The Delivery Planning Unit (DPU) was launched on 1 September. This replaces the Operations Support Unit and the temporary Transition Hub which was created while the regional offices were being decommissioned. The DPU is focussed on operational delivery, planning, information management and also supports operational field managers.

The MHS has written to FBOs with revised contact details over recent months. If you are unsure of who to contact with finance related or operational queries, please consult your Lead Vet or Business Manager.

Industry survey results

While Food Business Operators can contact their Business Manager or any other member of staff at any time, the MHS makes a point of regularly asking FBOs to comment on MHS performance in a more structured way. This takes the form of an annual survey which asks for feedback on staff performance, enforcement and other topical issues, and more recently, the Transformation Programme.

The results of the last survey are summarised below:

- ◆ The overall satisfaction with MHS staff working in premises is 92%, slightly up on the previous year.
- ◆ We measure satisfaction with various aspects of premises based staff performance such as decision making, knowledge levels, punctuality etc. All aspects have improved by up to 7%.
- ◆ 93% of respondents were satisfied with the level of cooperation from MHS staff in premises. The highest levels of satisfaction were found in smaller premises, falling as premises size grows.
- ◆ 33% of respondents felt that the number of MHS staff in their premises could be reduced. The lowest demand for change came from smaller premises and the highest from medium-sized premises.
- ◆ FBO satisfaction with MHS office-based staff (included the regional offices at the time of the survey) was 83%, slightly up on the previous year. Various aspects of office staff performance were measured, such as 'keeping you informed' (during progress of a query); 'resolving your concerns promptly' and 'referring your query to the most appropriate person'.
- ◆ There was a 4% increase in respondents who felt that the MHS is an 'effective enforcement body'. Of those who had been subject to some level of enforcement, the percentage who agreed that they understood why action had been taken and that it was in fact fair and proportionate had increased by up to 22%.
- ◆ Only 9 respondents had had contact the MHS over a health and safety matter. 8 of the responses were from red meat abattoirs. Of the 7 respondents who rated their satisfaction with the way the matter had been handled, 5 were 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied'.
- ◆ We asked FBOs whether, in general, they believe they receive fair and equal treatment from the MHS. This figure has risen by 6% to 83%.
- ◆ We also asked FBOs how they felt about the Transformation programme in particular and what, in their opinion, was driving the programme. The majority of respondents highlighted the need to reduce costs as the main driver and indicated most of the cost savings could be made by more efficient MHS resource deployment (46%), and more efficient demand by FBOs of MHS resources (25%).
- ◆ When asked what the MHS most needed to change as a result of the Transformation Programme, respondents indicated 'MHS organisational structure' (27%), 'organisational culture' (25%) and 'operational processes' (22%).

Each year, at the end of the survey, we ask FBOs to rate their overall satisfaction with MHS services by giving a score between 1 and 10. This score has risen to 7.2, up from 6.4 the previous year.

Feedback from FBOs allows us to direct resources appropriately and to make changes where they are most needed. We are currently reviewing the way we obtain FBO feedback. If you feel that a survey is perhaps not the best way to do this and you have other suggestions you want to put forward, please email cheryl.smith@mhs.gov.uk or call 01904 455 558.

Ergonomics in meat inspection

The MHS has now begun its programme of ergonomic risk assessments. In 2007 the Health and Safety Executive recommended that the MHS further develop its risk assessment systems, including the assessment of musculoskeletal risks.

In developing this particular assessment, HSE publications* were used as our reference materials. We also took some advice from the HSE on matters of interpretation. The end result is the MHS Ergonomic Risk Assessment. This process involves an examination of each inspection point on a species-by-species basis. Information is gathered in the slaughterhouse environment and is then input into a spreadsheet to inform the determination of risk. The information gathered relates to repetition, working posture, force required, working environment, psychosocial factors, work breaks and factors related to individuals.

This comes at an important time for the MHS as we continue to drive forward the transformation agenda. Over the coming months, work on identifying further efficiency gains will continue. This work will need to consider the application of the risk assessment methodology. Noel Sykes, MHS Health and Safety Manager

comments: "When we look at the nature of the work we expect our staff to do and the number of staff involved, we should not make changes without first assessing what the health and safety implications could be. This methodology represents good practice in preventing work-related upper limb disorders". Any industry organisations wishing to receive a copy of the document should contact the Health and Safety team at mhs.healthandsafety@mhs.gov.uk

Ergonomic Risk Assessment	Ref No: _____ / Species / Line Position / DDMMYY	
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Section 2

1. Repetition		Yes	No	Description of any problems and any probable cause(s):	Risk control options	Chosen risk control options including current controls
1.1. Does the task involve repeating the same movement every few seconds	A 'cycle' is a sequence of actions of relatively short duration that is repeated over and over, and is almost always the same. A cycle is not necessarily associated with one single joint movement, but also with complex movements of one or more parts of the body.	<input type="checkbox"/> +1	<input type="checkbox"/> +0		Reduce repetition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure task (job design). Reduce duration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement job enlargement; Ensure adequate breaks; Implement job rotation; Limit/control overtime. 	Current controls in place:
1.2. Is there a cycle or sequence of movements that is repeated twice per minute or more Or More than 50% of the task involves performing a repetitive sequence of motions?		<input type="checkbox"/> +1	<input type="checkbox"/> +0		Further controls to reduce the risk:	

Form: HSM 4.2

Revision No: 1

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Part of the new Ergonomic Risk Assessment form

* documents referred to:

HSG60 - "Upper limb disorders in the workplace"

ART - "Assessment of repetitive tasks"

Contact us

We want Link to be a useful and informative publication. Please contact us with any suggestions, comments or ideas for articles. If you would like to receive Link in a different format, please let us know. You can contact us at link@mhs.gov.uk or call 01904 455558. This is your opportunity to tell us about the issues most important to you. We look forward to hearing from you.

MHS Communications.



The Meat Hygiene Service is an executive agency of the Food Standards Agency



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