

To Pig Slaughterhouse Operators in England and Wales

12 November 2007

Reference:

Dear Pig Slaughterhouse Operator

Implementation of Food Chain Information From 1 January 2008

I am writing to you to inform you about the new legislative requirements for food chain information (FCI) for pigs from 1 January 2008.

From 1 January 2008 FCI must be provided for all pigs you receive for slaughter. The responsibility for receiving FCI rests with slaughterhouse operators, so you will need to make arrangements with your suppliers about how to fulfil this responsibility. Draft guidance on the information you should request is enclosed. To increase the awareness of pig producers we will soon be publicising the FCI requirements through the industry press.

To help reduce the burden of FCI on your business and that of pig producers, the FSA and the British Pig Executive (BPEX) have funded a trial project to enable FCI to be submitted and received electronically. Details of the trial are given in the enclosed paper. We wish to encourage slaughterhouse operators and pig producers to take the opportunity to use the BPEX system.

As part of the trial, MHS has developed systems for the collection and recording of ante- and post-mortem inspection results, which will enable this valuable information

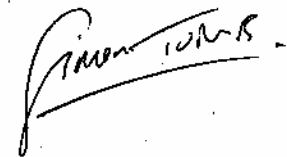


to be communicated to slaughterhouse operators and producers and their vets soon after the slaughter of each consignment. Details of the MHS Collection and Communication of Inspection Results (CCIR) system are also given in enclosed information paper.

Please contact me if you have any queries about Food Chain Information and your responsibilities.

I am copying this letter and attachments to a number of industry representative bodies.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Tudor', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

SIMON TUDOR

Meat Hygiene & Veterinary Division

FOOD CHAIN INFORMATION - INFORMATION FOR SLAUGHTERHOUSE OPERATORS

Background

Legislation¹ comes into force on 1 January 2008 requiring slaughterhouse operators to *'request, receive, check and act upon'* food chain information (FCI) for all pigs sent to the slaughterhouse.

This requirement forms part of the whole chain, farm-to-fork, approach to food safety introduced by the Hygiene Regulations from the beginning of 2006. Implementation of FCI was initially required only for poultry, with a delayed, progressive implementation of FCI for other species; pigs from 2008; cattle and sheep from 2010.

FCI contributes to slaughterhouse operators' HACCP-based food safety management systems by providing information about animals procured for slaughter. Many FBOs will already require much of this information from their pig suppliers as part of their commercial relations with them, and may have little more to do to comply.

Contents of Food Chain Information

FSA has worked with the industry and other stakeholders to provide the enclosed draft guidance on the components of FCI which are laid down in the legislation. This draft guidance has been developed with the aims of ensuring that FCI is restricted to information that can be used directly by the operator or MHS staff at the slaughterhouse, and of adding no unnecessary burden on the industry. The guidance should be taken as minimum requirements – ultimately it is for slaughterhouse operators to dictate the information they require from suppliers.

The provision of FCI can be simplified by dividing it into two parts:

¹ Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 laying down specific rules for food of animal origin

- information concerning the holding (likely to remain constant and require only occasional updating)
- information about the specific batch of pigs

Once you have the necessary holding information for your regular suppliers, they will need to provide you only with the information relating to each consignment.

Currently slaughterhouse operators should require information about all pigs showing signs of abnormality (equivalent to the old Schedule 18 declaration). FCI extends this information requirement to all pigs – where pigs are showing signs of abnormality, information about this should be included in the FCI for the batch.

A component of FCI is information about previous results of inspection of pigs from the same holding. MHS is currently developing systems for recording inspection results and reporting them back to producers (see below). Producers will be required to provide this information to slaughterhouse operators with subsequent batches of pigs.

Use of Food Chain Information

Slaughterhouse operators should use FCI to inform their HACCP-based food safety management systems and to make decisions about accepting animals and any special arrangements e.g. slaughter at the end of a run, additional dressing requirements. The FCI must then be passed to the OV who should be informed of any health concerns about the pigs before ante-mortem inspection.

The OV will use FCI to determine any special ante- and post-mortem inspection arrangements or additional actions e.g. testing for *Trichinella*.

Effective FCI provision will open the prospect of simplified, visual-only post-mortem inspection systems. The Hygiene Regulations permit the use of such inspection for pigs under certain conditions and on the basis of epidemiological data from the holding. Once reliable FCI systems, which enable the OV to assess the eligibility of batches of pigs for simplified inspection, are in place, consideration can be given to applying visual only post-mortem inspection in UK.

Timing

For the time being, there is a relaxation of the requirement for FCI to be received by slaughterhouse operators at least 24 hours in advance of receipt of animals.

Although this means that FCI may be sent with the pigs, it will not give operators time to check and act on it. Most pig slaughterhouses schedule the delivery of pigs from specific suppliers well in advance of slaughter. FSA recommends that slaughterhouse operators ask suppliers to provide FCI long enough before delivery to the slaughterhouse to enable them and the OV to take any necessary action.

FCI – practicalities and BPEX project

Requesting and receiving FCI is the responsibility of slaughterhouse operators, as is the means by which this is done. Paper-based systems may be adequate for small slaughterhouses but will present difficulties for larger establishments dealing with large numbers of suppliers, and for producers who frequently send consignments of pigs for slaughter.

FSA has worked with BPEX on a pilot project on information exchange systems. The original aim of this project was to test the feasibility and benefits of electronic information exchange between slaughterhouse operators and pig producers. It has since been extended to include feedback of MHS inspection results to producers and their vets.

The BPEX pilot is a web-based system that makes use of current BPEX databases. Practical trials began in one large plant in September 2007 and are now running in several plants. The pilot is planned to run until March 2008 when a decision will be made about its long term application. The FSA believes that this electronic system has value for food safety as well as the potential for commercial benefits for the industry, and wishes to encourage slaughterhouse operators and pig producers to use it.

Slaughterhouse operators considering using the BPEX electronic FCI system should contact Andrew Knowles (details below) to discuss and arrange a training session.

MHS Collection and Communication of Inspection Results (CCIR)

As part of the FSA/BPEX project, MHS is developing systems for the collection of ante- and post-mortem inspection results and correlating them with each batch of pigs. Previously these results have been recorded on a daily basis for each slaughterhouse, with limited opportunity to relate the results to the pigs from individual supplier sources. MHS and FSA have worked with the industry and other stakeholders to develop new condition headings under which inspection results will be recorded, with the aim of gathering information and reporting it in a form which will be of maximum benefit for all – slaughterhouse operators, pig producers and their vets. In addition, better methods of recording inspection results will permit improved analysis for disease surveillance purposes.

MHS will use a variety of methods to communicate the ante- and post-mortem inspection results back to producers. For producers and slaughterhouses participating in the BPEX electronic FCI project, inspection results will be sent by e-mail to slaughterhouse operators, producers and their veterinary surgeons soon after slaughter of the batch.

Operators and producers not participating in the BPEX project, but with internet access, will, in the future, be able to obtain their inspection reports directly from the MHS 'extranet' which MHS plans to launch early in the new year.

Those without internet access may receive their results in hard copy format. This will be subject to local arrangements.

You should now discuss with MHS and BPEX the best method for you to receive the reports of inspection results.

Inspection Results as Food Chain Information

Historical inspection reports for a holding form part of food chain information. You will have access to, or copies of, inspection results for previous consignments of pigs from the same site slaughtered at your slaughterhouse, depending on how you elect

to receive the reports from MHS. For recent consignments of pigs slaughtered at other slaughterhouses you will need to ask the producer to provide you with the inspection reports – either by email or by hard copy.

Initially, until the MHS CCIR system has been in place for sufficient time, producers will have no inspection results. As inspection reports become available you should check them and ask your suppliers to provide those for pigs killed at other slaughterhouses.

Future developments

The enclosed guidance on FCI is presented in draft form and may require amending as experience is gained. The FSA wishes to continue to work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that FCI is useful, practical and does not impose disproportionate burdens on industry, and invites your comments to achieve these aims. Similarly, MHS is open to views on how its CCIR system can be improved for the benefit of stakeholders.

Contact points for further information or comments are:

Food Chain Information:	Kenneth Clarke, Veterinary Adviser, FSA kenneth.clarke@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
BPEX electronic FCI project:	Andrew Knowles, Strategy Co-ordinator, BPEX andrew_knowles@bpex.org.uk 01908 844708
MHS Inspection Results:	Liz Olney, Vet Tec Business Manager, MHS liz.olney@mhs.gov.uk

Information flow diagram – Food Chain Information and Inspection Reports

