

An evaluation of food chain information (FCI) and collection and communication of inspection Results (CCIR) for all species

Area of research interest: [Innovative regulator](#)

Study duration: 2011-09-01

Project code: FS145002

Conducted by: Meat and Livestock Commercial Services Ltd

Background

Hygiene regulations specify the information requirements for the health of animals arriving from the farms to slaughterhouses. This record forms the FCI and is used by the slaughterhouse operator and official veterinarian (OV) to organise the slaughter procedures. The OV also uses the FCI to decide appropriate ante- and post-mortem inspection tasks.

The CCIR records ante- and post-mortem inspection findings and returns these to the farmer. This informs the farmer and his private veterinarian of any pathological conditions to assist them in the management of the health and welfare of their livestock.

Research Approach

This project assessed the relevance of the content of FCI in relation to public health and animal health issues. It was complemented by an analysis of databases holding inspection findings.

FCI was also reviewed through interviews with farmers, slaughterhouses, food business operators (FBOs) and OVs. Links between the information provided in the FCI and the health of live animals and carcass inspections were identified.

Other information systems such as herd health plans and third party assurance schemes were also examined to find appropriate links which could be incorporated into the FCI.

The information gathered was used to establish the effectiveness of both information exchange systems and the accuracy of the material provided. Methods in which these documents could be adjusted or changed, to record relevant and accurate information, were considered, to underpin an improved system of meat controls.

Results

This survey showed that the FCI reporting system should be maintained. Most large scale pig and poultry producers and processors used it effectively, seeing FCI as essential to producing quality products. Conversely, small scale producers and the FBOs they supplied did not always share this view.

Many cattle and sheep producers and FBOs felt that compiling the FCI was a burden and not particularly useful. Several FBOs and OV's questioned the accuracy of some of the reporting elements. This, together with inspection results, made them believe it was unhelpful for targeting inspection tasks, which might improve food safety and animal health and welfare.

However, cattle and sheep producers felt that it would be an improvement if FCI was comprehensively applied. All sectors stated that FCI should be linked with farm assurance schemes, for example, in order to gain more information about individual animals or the conditions of herds and flocks 'on farm'. Producers could forward this information to OV's and FBOs in the plants before animals were sent to the slaughterhouse.

The CCIR requirement was a successful tool for the larger poultry and pig producers and processors, who obtained information through the inspection recording database. However, most of the cattle and sheep producers said that they did not regularly request inspection results.

Recommendations included:

- to carry out a risk analysis for each species to account for differing production and marketing systems, highlighting 'key information' for recording rather than 'minimum elements'
- to improve knowledge of the FCI role through a communications programme targeted at cattle, sheep and pig producers outside the larger integrated chains
- to help FBOs recognise the value of FCI and how this could be used to improve the safety of their products

Research report

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

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