

FEDERATION NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR SCOTLAND'S INDEPENDENT BUTCHERS

Published by SFMTA

MAY 2002

This Month.....

PIGS: THE BIG STINK

Daily Record blows the whistle



THE BUDGET 2002

The consequences



FOOD LABEL CHEATS

Consumers' Association 'names and shames'

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Check your Contracts of Employment

UNDERCOVER VISITS TO BUTCHERS AND DELIS

Health Which? reports

OPINION EXAMINED IN SCHOOLS

Scottish Consumer Council research



YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

Caught on camera

IMPERIALISM REIGNS AT SAFEWAY

Supermarket sets the rules

THE REAL ANIMAL FARM

Rob Wainwright's view

YOUR FEDERATION IS HERE TO HELP YOU:

"Phone a friend"

telephone 01738 637472 fax 01738 441059 e mail: sfmta@sfmta.co.uk



No May Day from QMS

A front page story in the *Daily Record* of Monday 8th April brought more grief to the meat industry. The article revealed distasteful practices at a pig farm that was a member of the Quality Meat Scotland Farm Assurance Scheme. Television picked up the tale of woe generating much consumer interest in the workings of the farm at Ormiston. Butchers from all over Scotland reported negative over-the-counter comments and the Federation asked QMS to clarify the actions taken by them.

On 10th April SFMTA Executive sanctioned an urgent letter to QMS asking for assurances and questioning the effectiveness of the scheme inspectorate.

The initial reply did not fully satisfy your SFMTA office bearers and following a second letter to QMS, Alasdair Muir Managing Director of QMS has provided the enclosed response.

It is vitally important that QMS steps in to inform member promoting Specially Selected Scotch (SSS) just what measures have been taken to strengthen the inspection process and minimise the risk of something like this happening again.

With so much of the QMS promotion budget being directed at SSS it is disturbing that the scheme can be brought into question by one newspaper article.

Further on in this newsletter we reproduce excerpts from a *Sunday Times* article by former Scotland rugby internationalist / farmer, Rob Wainwright who pleads for an understanding of country issues by urban dwellers.

If you wish to add to the debate contact the Federation Office, e mail feedback@sfmta.co.uk Or come along to the Regional meetings in May the dates and venues of which are printed below.

Ormiston Farm is owned by Arthur Simmers a former chairman of the Scottish Pig Association and he once owned a quarter of all sows in the country.

At the height of his success, he had 16,000 breeding sows and eight farms with a turnover of more than £16million a year. But the tycoon's empire crashed in 1998 when pig and sheep prices fell, tipping his business £11.5million into the red and bankrupting it.

His three firms, which employed 242 people, folded, leaving a trail of debt. But he resurrected his career shortly later when he set up his new company Scotpigs - much to the outrage of his creditors.

In 1995, Simmers appeared in court on charges of pig cruelty but was cleared. His then company, Arthur Simmers Ltd, denied causing unnecessary suffering to animals at its Muir of Pert piggery, near Dundee, by failing to provide adequate veterinary treatment and leaving pig carcasses where dogs could get at them.

FOR SALE

TURBOFAN GAS OVEN with stand and trays
AVERY PACKSCAN [labelling machine] with scale.

Telephone 01324 712701
or e mail MJCRAM9996@aol.com.

JAMES RAE AND SON, POLMONT.

WANTED

SFMTA receives many requests from businesses looking for refrigerated cabinets.

If you are storing away a cabinet that you don't need let us know and maybe we could turn that asset into cash.

Telephone Bruce on 01738 637472

Filthy Swine

SERIOUS health concerns over bacon and pork eaten by millions of Scots emerged yesterday.

An undercover investigation into one of the country's largest pork producers discovered animals in cruel, filthy conditions.

Pigs were found eating the corpse of another animal in cramped, rat-infested pens.

Ormiston Pig Farm in West Lothian is run by a firm called Scotpigs, who have piggeries across Scotland. The firm's boss is tycoon Arthur Simmers, nicknamed The Pig King.

Our findings have major safety implications for consumers in the wake of BSE and foot and mouth.



Horror at the Pig Farm

Steve Smith Daily Record Exclusive Apr 8 2002

Investigators' shocking find at top pork producers - Video shows cannibal swine eating carcasses - Feeding bins infested with roaming rat packs - Inquiry demanded after fears over foot and mouth

SCOTS consumers are being sold bacon from pigs reared in horrific conditions.

An investigation has uncovered a stomach-churning lack of hygiene at a farm run by one of the country's biggest pork producers. Pigs were found feasting on decaying carcasses of their own kind. And their filthy pens were over-run by rats.

The appalling conditions were discovered at Ormiston Pig Farm in West Lothian. It is run by Scotpigs, one of the country's biggest pork producers. The revelations raise serious questions of public health and safety, particularly in the wake of the BSE and foot and mouth outbreaks. And animal welfare experts say the conditions at the farm amount to one of the worst cases of animal cruelty they have come across in Scotland.

Last night, Britain's leading food safety expert Professor Hugh Pennington described conditions in the piggery as "a classic nightmare". He said the filthy conditions posed a grave risk to the human food chain, as well as to the animals involved. Professor Pennington added: "Top of my list of worries would be salmonella, which can be easily passed on to the pigs from wild animals such as rats.

"There is a real contamination issue here because anyone handling the pig carcasses could easily spread salmonella to other foods. The workers at this unit are also at risk from diseases such as leptospirosis, which is spread from rats' urine.

"There are clearly other hazards, such as foot and mouth, the first cases of which were from a badly-run piggery. "Pigs are extremely efficient spreaders of the virus and conditions such as these could spark another outbreak."

Secret video footage shot in the piggery by investigators show:

Pigs tearing at a dead animal lying among them in a tiny pen. Dozens of rats running over the pigs as they sleep. Hordes of rats scurrying around the pigs' feeding bins and eating their food. Injured pigs stumbling around in piles of their own waste, with no bedding.

Scotpigs have farms across the country. The boss is Aberdeenshire-based tycoon Arthur Simmers, nicknamed the Pig King because of his massive control on pork production.

Simmers, who set up Scotpigs in 1998, appeared in court on charges of pig cruelty in 1995, but was cleared.

Les Ward, of Advocates for Animals, who carried out the investigation into Ormiston Pig Farm, said: "We were absolutely appalled by what we saw on the video. To see a pig virtually tearing bits off another pig and being run over by rats gives us real concerns about the other facilities. "We want an urgent inquiry into this company's other premises."

A foul stench fills the air for miles around Ormiston. Fields and ditches near the farm are filled several feet deep with raw sewage. Dozens of pigs are crammed into pens in six dimly-lit sheds. The weaker ones collapse and die where they stand, providing easy pickings for the hundreds of rats scavenging among them.

The other pigs, deranged in the darkness, also nibble on their dead. Those who do survive spend several months in the squalor until they are fat enough for slaughter.

Investigator Toni Vernelli, who shot the 15-minute film, said: "We have filmed in many piggeries, but this is about the worst we have seen.

"I couldn't believe how many rats there were - hundreds if not thousands running over the floors, walls and ceilings. You couldn't breathe because of the horrendous smell. You couldn't miss the dead rats - they were everywhere.

"In some places the pigs were on bare concrete, so they were walking about in several inches of their own waste. We saw two dead pigs lying in the pens with other animals. One was constantly being eaten by the other pigs.

"Any animal being kept in this type of confinement can develop strange mental disorders, which explains why they were nibbling at one of their own. At one point there must have been about 20 rats in one of the feed bins - they weren't even scared when we approached.

"Surely, if somebody was checking on these pigs regularly they would have done something about clearing up the dead rats and the infestation of live ones. It smacks of neglect. Something has to be done urgently because these animals cannot go on living in these conditions. "

Simmers, who lives in Whiterashes, Aberdeenshire, last night denied owning the farm. But he would not answer questions about Scotpigs, and retreated into his farmhouse, shutting the door.

The dossier of information about Ormiston Pig Farm is available to police and the SSPCA. Last night SSPCA chiefs said they would hold urgent meetings with Government vets today before inspecting the piggery.

Chief Superintendent Mike Flynn said: "We will be looking at the video today and would expect to be going into this piggery shortly after.

"We have to get approval from Government vets, who would also take part in the inspection. From what I've heard, there are obviously concerns about the running of this unit. I have concern about the large number of rats - that just shouldn't happen.

"Anyone running these premises must have proper pest control procedures in place. Rats are always a concern because of the disease risk. The last thing the industry needs is a health risk. We will also want to know about the dead pigs in the pens - how long they had been there and how often the animals are checked on.

"Dead rats or dead animals must be disposed of properly before the end of the working day." Alistair Donaldson, technical director of Quality Meat Scotland, said last night: "We will want to view this video footage as soon as possible. A set of standards are in place and if they have not been followed in this case we will want to take the appropriate action. We would certainly look into any of the allegations raised in this video. We would want to be involved in any inspection."

New Meat Hygiene Policy Forum launched

A new stakeholder group, the Meat Hygiene Policy Forum, was launched on 16th April 2002 by the FSA's Deputy Chair Suzi Leather who explained the objectives:-

"We believe the Forum will help us improve our policy delivery by facilitating the flow of information between our stakeholders and ourselves by identifying potential difficulties at an early stage and finding mutually agreeable solutions."

The group, which will meet every six months, will give consumers, enforcers, retailers and representatives of the meat industry the chance to discuss meat hygiene issues with the FSA officials responsible for policy development and implementation

The Forum will have a two-tiered structure comprising:

- A Meat Hygiene Policy Forum - representatives from organisations with a direct interest in meat hygiene policy (consumers, enforcers, policy makers, meat industry and retailers); and
- A system of Meat Hygiene Policy Forum Advisory Sub-Groups convened on an ad-hoc basis to consider particular issues in depth and provide the Policy Forum with expert or technical advice.

Membership of the Forum will be balanced both in terms of background interest and geographical coverage. The Federation was represented by Past President Hamish Deans at the inaugural meeting in London. In particular, the FSA sees consumer involvement as crucial to the success of the Forum and is looking forward to welcoming consumer groups to the meetings.

FOR SALE (also available for lease)

54 & 56 SEAFIELD STREET, CULLEN, AB56 4SW



A rare opportunity to purchase an established and profitable butchers business due to the imminent retirement of the owners.

NOTE: A full inventory of the items to be included in the sale can be made available to genuinely interested parties. Accounts are available to genuinely interested parties.

The premises are well worth viewing and this is an excellent opportunity for someone wishing to acquire their own business at an affordable price.

This Butcher's business has been trading from the premises for the last 28 years. The main retail premises are at 54 Seafield Street and 56 Seafield

Street is currently used as a cooling area but it has a separate door to the street, meantime blocked off. It is believed that No 54 could be utilised for a number of ancillary uses such as a hot food take away outlet etc-subject to obtaining the relevant local authority permissions.

The premises are located in the heart of Cullen where there is a considerable clientele and they are well sited to benefit from passing trade as they are located on the main street with the A98 trunk road passing through Cullen from Banff to Inverness along this road. The premises are fully fitted out for a butchers shop and all equipment including all movable items are included in the sale. **ENTRY:** By arrangement

PRICE ON APPLICATION: includes the two shop areas and first floor premises, equipment, ground to the rear and goodwill

VIEWING: – Contact Mr & Mrs Paterson Daytime – 01542 840 202 & Evenings – 01542 835761.

RATEABLE VALUE: £2,500 (Amount Payable per annum £1,056.80)

The Budget 2002

Gordon Brown delivered the first Budget of this Labour government's second parliamentary term on Wednesday 17 April 2002. Unusually, the Budget took place after the start of the new tax year. This certainly gave plenty of time for intense speculation as to its contents!

MAIN BUDGET PROPOSALS

- Starting rate of corporation tax cut from 10% to 0%.
Small companies rate of corporation tax cut from 20% to 19%
- National Insurance increases announced to take effect in 2003
- Business assets taper relief for capital gains improved
- Introduction of VAT flat rate scheme for smaller businesses
- Inheritance tax threshold increased to £250,000
- Measures to prevent avoidance of stamp duty
- Improvements to the charitable giving Gift Aid Scheme
- New Child Tax Credit rates for 2003 announced

TAX RATES

Despite a certain amount of speculation to the contrary, there has been no change to the income tax rates. The starting rate remains at 10%, the basic rate at 22% and the higher rate at 40%. As usual the bands have been extended so that for 2002/03, the 10% starting rate applies to the first £1,920 of taxable income and the basic rate applies to taxable income from £1,921 up to the new higher rate threshold of £29,900.

NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS (NICs)

In 2002/03, the starting point for employees' NICs continues to be aligned with that for employers and the income tax personal allowance, so that no NICs are payable until earnings exceed £89 per week.

Changes for 2003/04: The Chancellor announced a 1% increase in the rate of NICs for employees, employers and the self-employed from 6 April 2003. The government intend these increases to fund improvements in the NHS. The details are shown in the table above right.

PAYROLL SERVICES

In the Summer of 2001, the government announced a review of the provision of payroll services for new and small businesses. The review concluded that greater use of information technology is the key to enabling businesses to deal with the complexity of payroll obligations.

The government now proposes:

- employers with 50 or more employees will be required to file electronically from 2005/06
- employers with fewer than 50 employees will have to file electronically from 2009/10, with financial incentives from 2004/05 to encourage earlier adoption of the new regime.

Up to the Minute

Some of the business from the April Executive Meeting in Perth

MEMBERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT:

Convenor Mark Barnett confirmed the Chief Executive's report that 88% of members had now paid and that 6 Corporate Members fees had been received.

Handbook - The Handbook had now been circulated to all paid members. The Chief Executive had updated the Legislative articles and the handbook gave good solid information to members, which included details of the Sunlight preferential rates.

Golf: The Federation Golf day was arranged for 15th May at Rosemount Golf Course, Blairgowrie. Tee-off time was between 11.15 and 12 noon. The first 25 entries will be accepted.



The Federation has written to all Local Authorities Environmental Department, outlining what SFMTA does for its members including a copy of our Handbook with the letter. Mark Barnett stated that a Fife Council EHO had commented that they would wish to see all butchers with the SFMTA Labelling Board, which could make their job easier.

The Chief Executive continued by commenting on the **Regional Meetings**. The meeting on 18 March in Glasgow had not been well attended but the meeting had been a very good positive event. The following night the meeting had been at Monkton, Ayrshire, again it was a good positive evening. It was noted that after the formal discussions a number of members stayed on just chatting with colleagues. At Elgin on 26th March, we had a good turn out with the room almost full to capacity. The

outcome of the evening again was very positive. Mike Gibson, a local butcher and member of the Scottish Food Advisory Council was present at the meeting and responded to Douglas's comments of SFAC with an understanding and support for the Federation. Most people attending the meeting contributed something to the discussions.

PROMOTIONS: In the absence of Convenor Cheryl Murdoch, the Chief Executive presented the report. Douglas stated that he had had a meeting with Maggie Mitchell from QMS to build on what has happened since our last meeting. The meeting was reminded of the discussions at a previous meeting when an agreed format for the Independent Butchers' Logo had been identified.

Jamie Chapman raised the question of membership of Specially Select Scotch and the need to sell 100% Scotch Beef. He wondered how the supermarkets could be in this scheme.

It was noted that some supermarkets were displaying the SSS banner in front of a cabinet that contained other than Scotch meat. It was felt that the scheme was open to abuse and especially by the larger supermarkets.

Douglas tabled three papers one referred to the Consultation paper for the proposals around Quality Meat Scotland assuming some of the roles of MLC; the second was on the proposals of the Welsh Body and thirdly the English Body – "Team England".

Any response to these proposals has to be received by 28 May.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT: Convenor Bruce Brymer opened his report by commenting that today we received the first formal entry for the under 30 year old Scottish Meat Skills Competition

Distance Learning Hygiene Programmes: Bruce reported that due to lack of uptake on group courses, Food Training Services had developed a Distance Learning Package for both Essential and Intermediate Hygiene. Interest has been shown for the Essential Course with 7 candidates currently registered and a potential of a further 8 to be registered. Of those already registered 5 are non-skillseekers, who have paid £40 each for the course (There is no fee for currently registered Skillseekers)

Intermediate Distance Learning: Bruce reported that this package is now ready to go out to candidates. He added that Moira has had to look for EHO support for candidates and to mark the pre-exam paper. Approximately 3 hours per candidate will be required from the EHO. The cost of the package will be £295.

UK Skills event – Four Nations Championship: The Four Nations championship will take place during the week of the U K Skills, which is 13th November to 16th November.

Bruce added that the Spring Training Newsletter had now been circulated to all registered trainees and that copies were available for any Executive members who wished to have one.

Skillseeker Moira Brady reported that it was crucial to the cost effectiveness of managing the skillseeker programme that trainees completed their targets within the set period. Failure to do so was causing delays in income and also additional expense of an assessor making further visits.

Lead LEC Developments – Moira reported that on 31st March Food Training Services' Contract with the 12 individual LECS within the Scottish Enterprise area, ceased and now come under a direct contract with Scottish

Enterprise with an appointed Lead LEC (Grampian) responsible for working with us.

MTC Intermediate Certificate Meat & Poultry Management: Moira stated that Food Training Services was appointed a nominated provider at the end of last year and since then we have been working towards getting candidates registered. The programme is geared more to Meat Plants, although designed for supervisors/managers within the retail sector too. However, as the programme involves four tutorials per units (and there are four units) the candidates from butchers' shops would require to come together in a group for these events. To date we have had enquiries from three meat plants and we hope to be able to start delivering the programme very soon.

Meat Safety Certificate: In December of last year a mailshot was sent to all Scottish Meat Plants, advising them of the Meat Safety Certificate and our approval to deliver this. Two enquiries were received and one plant has now agreed a date for delivery to 15 people. The other company has indicated an interest in taking it forward later in the summer.

LIVESTOCK: Convenor Jamie Chapman reported that it had been a quiet month on the livestock front. Cattle and sheep prices are fairly consistent with quality stock still commanding good prices. Usually prices start to rise between the end of April and July with the house fed cattle drying up and the grass cattle not yet ready. If there is the predicted shortage of cattle this has yet to be seen! New season lambs are starting to appear at markets with the top quality being seen to sell in the region of £75 for 46kg lambs. There may be a shortage of early lambs, with the traditional early areas, such as Cumbria, being culled out last year.

Some large plants continue to avoid the live auction markets, this effectively allows the multiples to dictate the price to the producers. Hide prices are rising with up to £30 for cattle and £3.20 for hogs.

Hamish Deans reported on the Meat Hygiene Policy Forum Meeting that he attended. He

remarked that there was a lot of on-going concern displayed regarding the Food Standards Agency taking over the responsibility. FSA appear to be listening more to the Unions than the Meat Hygiene Services and this may mean that a Vet could be monitoring a Meat Hygiene Services Inspector who is monitoring a slaughterman!

Micro-testing this will commence within large plants in June along with the need to implement HACCP. Smaller plants will require to implement this at a later date. On average the cost of implementation of this could be around £6,000 per year.

Hamish continued by stating that report cases of head meat being identified in products at analytical testing. There is evidence that this had come from Ireland. Hamish stated that manufacturers are importing head meat and including it in processing. He added that it was not illegal.

Hamish then remarked upon a new Directive from Europe regarding the disposal of blood and added that if were to follow this through completely it would do away with blood collection.

The meeting's attention next turned to an article printed in the Daily Record on Monday, regarding a filthy pig farm run by one of the country's biggest pork producers. The article did not read well and there were serious health concerns regarding the products from these pigs.

The pig company were members of QMS's Farm Assured Scheme but were removed immediately on the awareness of the report. Questions are being asked of QMS why the firm were ever allowed into the scheme and that further investigations are needed on how they remained members. It was felt that we cannot just accept this we certainly need to have more information on when they were last inspected and what did the report state. There was concerned that this could impact on other members of Quality schemes, as it belittles the whole aspect of it.

Wilson Ferguson suggested the Chief Executive write to Ross Finnie putting

forward a strong complaint and send a copy letter to QMS. After further debate the meeting agreed that the Chief Executive should write to QMS and copy the letter to David Crawley of SEERAD and Ross Finnie. It should also be pointed out how issues such as this can impact on the whole industry and that, butchers are at the end of the line having to explain the problems to consumers.

LEGISLATION: The Chief Executive opened his report by stating that, following Neil Griffith's presentation at last month's meeting, regarding QUID, he wrote to IRIS and Food Standards Agency in London. He also raised the matter at a Scottish Food Advisory Committee Meeting in Melrose. IRIS have responded saying they will liaise with FSA to give a consolidate response.

Douglas continued with a report from the Scottish Food Advisory Committee Meeting in Melrose. This was the second meeting he had attended and it was very demeaning to note that nothing had happened from the E-Coli Task Force Report. The response from The Scottish Health Department was that they required to get on with things because of Scout and Guide camps etc. coming up soon.

BSE in sheep: the report on the consultation was not yet released. There were doubts over the continued importation of over 30 month beef from Poland, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Bruce Brymer suggested that an article be included in the next newsletter asking members to let the Chief Executive know of any **markets** where meat was being sold. It was suggested that a problem of monitoring controls arose because some EHOs would appear to have little money in their budget to cover inspections at markets on Saturdays or Sundays.

Beef Labelling: The Chief Executive referred to a letter regarding the Regulations being enforced at retail level. There is evidence of supermarkets not meeting the Regulations, which includes labelling of meat as Scottish Beef. SEERAD wish to be notified of any identified illegal practices.

Regional Meetings in May

The next round of regional Federation meetings will be held in the month of May.

Any Federation member is very welcome to attend at any (or all ☺) of the venues.

Corporate members KRH will put on a short presentation and in addition there will be an ideas session for barbecue products and promotion. All meetings start at 7.30pm, although the Glasgow meeting will be prefaced by the AGM of the Glasgow Retail Fleshers Association.

Date	Venue
Monday 13 th May	Swallow Hotel, Bellahouston, Glasgow
Tuesday 14 th May	Kings Arms, Melrose
Monday 20 th May	Laich Moray Hotel, Elgin
Tuesday 21 st May	Royal Tay Yacht Club, Broughty Ferry
Monday 27 th May	Hilton Hotel, Bellshill
Tuesday 28 th May	Quality Hotel, Ingleston
Wednesday 29 th May	Travel Lodge, Monkton

Open Markets

Although the Scottish Food Advisory Committee has reported on Farmers Markets they have suggested that they will turn their attention to other open markets where meat was sold like those held at Ingleston. SFAC were informed of markets at Kinross, Methil and Cowdenbeath but SFMTA would like to hear from members who know of open markets in their vicinity where closer examination of standards should be recommended.

Heinz baked beans, spaghetti shapes to count as 'vegetables' in daily intake guidelines

18 Apr 2002

Government health authorities are increasingly taking responsibility for alerting consumers to the link between nutrition and health. And quite right too - an improved diet is not only likely to grant consumers a more active, enjoyable and longer life; it will also help reduce the burden on the healthcare system.

Over the last couple of years the Food Standards Agency, among others, has devoted considerable resources to spreading the "five a day" message. Five portions of fruit or vegetables, that is. You can select from fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced - and now you can even choose Teletubbies pasta with mini sausages...

Yep, you read right. Last week I was astounded to learn that baked beans and canned spaghetti shapes in tomato sauce can be marketed as contributing towards the recommended daily intake of fruit and veg. The British Dietetic Association, which gave Heinz the green light to label more than 70 of its canned products as counting towards the "five a day", explained that the tomato sauce contained as many antioxidants as a standard portion of the fruit.

That may be the case, but to me this represents a dangerous watering-down of a very useful health guideline. Considering that many of the products in question contain high levels of salt, sugar and fat, specialists in heart disease are appalled. Nowhere must the label on the tin state that beans and pulses can only be counted as one of the five portions, nor is the need for a varied diet made explicit. The news ain't good.

QUALITY MEAT SCOTLAND – REPLY TO SFMTA

Tuesday 30th April 2002

Scotpigs Media expose

Video footage filmed by Advocates for Animals at Scotpigs unit at Ormiston, Kirkliston raised serious concerns with consumers (and indeed with the whole industry) regarding standards of pig production.

Members of the Federation were faced with searching questions from customers upset by the coverage. So what was the background to this unacceptable situation?

The farm was a member of the Specially Selected Scotch Farm Assurance – Pigs scheme. It had been inspected in December 2001 and was found to be satisfactory at that time.

QMS was advised of the video footage by the Daily Record in the late afternoon of Sunday 7th April. Once the farm was identified an assessor was sent in within two hours accompanied by an SSPCA inspector and the local vet.

There was obvious deterioration on the farm and a report was circulated to the Pig Technical Advisory Committee the next morning. As a result its certificate of approval was withdrawn that day (8th April) due to non compliances to scheme standards.

The State Veterinary Service and the SSPCA also visited the unit on Monday 8th April and both agencies confirmed that pig welfare was acceptable with no further action being taken.

This incident is of serious concern to QMS. We operate assurance schemes which demonstrate best practice from 'gate to plate' in order to underpin the Specially Selected Scotch brand. They therefore need to be credible and trusted by your customers.

Clearly in this case standards had fallen to an unacceptable level and prompt action was taken.

Pig production overall in Scotland is of a very high standard and indeed the scheme can demonstrate that it has played an important role in achieving this.

However, there is a need to continue to be vigilant in order to avoid a repeat of this incident.

Whilst QMS owns all the schemes in the meat and livestock sector it contracts out the running of them to an independent certification body called Scottish Food Quality Certification to ensure independence and credibility.

In turn SFQC is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (part of DTI) and as such is subjected to an annual audit of its systems and processes. SFQC can then certify individual schemes to EN45011 which is the EU standard.

Each scheme is operated by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of sector representatives and others from associated sectors. The farm schemes also have an SSPCA presence.

The TAC sets scheme standards, considers assessment reports, appoints and monitors assessors and has the power to expel. Furthermore an SFQC Governing Board with an independent chairman and a majority of independent members has overall control of the whole process and acts as the final arbiter in any appeal or dispute.

QMS is determined to continue the drive to enhance standards throughout the industry. We formed a Working Group in 2001 to do this and issues on food safety, biosecurity, environment and traceability have been put into action or are under consideration.

Your Chief Executive is a member of this Group and discussions have also started to develop an assurance scheme for butchers.

We very much regret that this incident happened and will continue to review procedures to prevent it recurring. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this further.

Ends

Quality Meat Scotland
The Rural Centre
Ingliston, Newbridge
EH28 8NZ

Telephone 0131 472 4040
E mail: info@qmscotland.co.uk

Undercover visits to butchers and delis

11Apr 2002

Health Which? reveals poor hygiene practices

Too many staff in butchers and delicatessens are flouting basic food hygiene rules and putting their customers at risk of food poisoning, according to *Health Which?*.

Health Which? sent two Environmental *Health Which?* Officers to 19 shops (butchers, delis, supermarkets, and a market stall) in London to buy ham sliced from a cooked joint. The EHOs posed as shoppers, and where they could, bought some raw meat first, to check what measures were taken to avoid cross-contamination. They awarded a score out of ten for general cleanliness of the shop and hygiene practices of the staff.

Supermarkets came out best in the hygiene stakes, but butchers and delis scored badly. In the shops visited, examples of poor hygiene practice included:

- A food handler coughing into her hand several times, then carrying on serving without washing her hands
- A food handler failing to wash her hands after touching raw beef mince, then going on to serve cooked ham
- A food handler wearing nail varnish, which could chip and contaminate food, and a jewelled ring which could harbour dirt
- A food handler rubbing his forehead using the plastic film which he subsequently used to catch ham from the meat slicer

The **market stall** only scored 2 out of 10. It was an open stall, and pigeons - and their droppings - were seen in the market. There was no sink to wash hands or equipment, and the inside of the chilled display unit was stained and greasy. One of the butchers got 2 out of 10 too. In many shops, the staff didn't wash their hands properly between touching raw and cooked meat, and some staff did not appear to wash their hands at all during the EHO's visit.

The shelf-life of ham, which our EHOs advised to be a maximum of three days, was overestimated by around half of all the staff in the shops visited. Again, supermarket staff generally had a better level of knowledge.

Consumers' Association has been calling for the introduction of licensing of all food premises, and a greater level of inspections of high-risk premises.

Emma Copeland, Principal Researcher for *Health Which?*, said:

"With an estimated 4.5 million cases of food poisoning in England each year, staff working in food premises have to clean up their act."

"Our undercover research found that too many staff were flouting basic food safety rules. We want to see licensing for all food premises introduced, which should include mandatory training in food hygiene, and inspection of all food premises before they open for business."

Tesco.com introduces sliding price scale for deliveries 24 Apr 2002

In a bid to lure Internet shoppers away from selecting the more popular times for the delivery of their groceries, Tesco.com is to introduce a sliding scale of delivery charges.

Shoppers at the highly successful e-tailing arm of bricks and mortar giant Tesco currently pay a flat rate of £5 (US\$7.24) for the delivery of their groceries, but they will now be charged between £3.99 and £6.49 depending on which time slot they pick.

Tesco.com's COO, Carolyn Bradley, revealed that Friday night is the delivery slot in the highest demand.

A real animal farm

Sunday Times, Ecosse cover story: April 14, 2002

Did last week's shock at television pictures of a rat-infested pig farm show concern for animals, or just urban ignorance of what the country is like? Rugby star turned crofter **Rob Wainwright** offers a few harsh truths about rural life.

In my short career as a writer I have received a few letters, and most have been to complain about my treatment of wildlife. A lady from Sutherland said how much she usually enjoyed the weekly column but that she had been horrified and revolted by my step-by-step description of how best to skin, disembowel and prepare a rabbit.

Another man was outraged that I admitted to harvesting gulls' eggs every May. And in a week that must have witnessed a news drought, I was pilloried by the tabloids for admitting that I took pleasure in ferreting for rabbits.

Nature may be red in tooth and claw but, in the black and white of newsprint, it can be too harsh for some softer souls to swallow.

I was reminded of this last week by another public outcry, mercifully this time not about me but concerning allegations of mistreatment of pigs at a farm in West Lothian.

Animal welfare investigators had taken video footage of conditions at Ormiston Farm, where they noted large numbers of rats around the pens, claimed to have witnessed cannibalism and found pigs "knee-deep in their own waste". How deep that is I do not know as pigs do not have knees as such.

A subsequent visit from the Scottish Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals, albeit a week later when many of the problems could have been cleaned up, found no evidence of any compromise in animal welfare.

"Although the pigs were dirty, they were physically okay," said Mike Flynn, one of the society's superintendents. "We found nothing to indicate the suffering suggested in the video."

I have never visited Ormiston, and I'm not here to defend whatever may or may not have happened there. Among most farmers there is scant sympathy for anyone found to be abusing or neglecting their stock. (It should be pointed out that Britain has some of the toughest legislation in the world for pig breeders and the vast majority of them follow it to the letter.) Scotpigs, which ran the farm, has now had its Farm Assured certification removed — which begs the question why its poor practices were not spotted long ago.

What is interesting, however, are the emotional triggers that propelled Ormiston on to the nightly television news and into the pages of the daily papers, rather than just the farming press. Rats, cannibalism, faeces . . . one could hardly think of three words better tailored to turn the stomachs of city dwellers and provoke moral outrage.

But were those shocked at the video reacting with horror at bad practice and animal cruelty? Or was their horror to do with something more cosmetic: an unexamined squeamishness among those who live in towns and cities, which prevents them from confronting the realities of country living.

Increasingly, the countryside is seen either as the utopian escape of the colour supplements (a kind of sanitised Babe the pig theme park) or a dystopian nightmare full of burning carcasses and institutionalised cruelty.

Fuelling this false dichotomy is the increasing remoteness of urban Britain from the workings of the countryside: mud, blood, death and all.

I'm no expert but I know a bit more: we kept pigs a couple of years back and I know that pigs and rats go together.

It does not take that much to work out that they are the devil to control. Of course, nobody wants them on their land. Good farmers do everything they can to control them. They are filthy creatures. The list of approximately 60 diseases that they carry includes salmonellosis, leptospirosis, swine dysentery, trichinosis, toxoplasmosis and (though not exactly common) bubonic plague.

But you can no more completely eradicate rats than you can keep foxes out of city waste bins. Being omnivores, like pigs, rats find spilled pig food to their liking. And keeping them out of warm sheds during the cold of winter requires a military operation.

What, then, about that porcine muck? Pigs naturally create it, particularly because their rooting habits will turn pasture into no-man's-land. The Ormiston pigs were in floored pens, which the video suggests were not being cleared adequately. But much of the beef you eat, especially if raised organically, will have lived in sheds on top of 3ft or more of accumulated manure and soiled straw with a daily ration of fresh bedding spread over it.

To an urban ear that may not sound pretty, but it is considered much kinder than raising beef on slatted floors that waste drops through, with no bedding at all. As to the footage of pigs tucking into a fallen comrade, they will naturally eat anything and there is a saying that if you faint in a pig pen you will never wake up.

If fallen stock isn't removed from pens as soon as it is sighted (neglect that may be what happened at Ormiston), any pig has a tendency to turn cannibal.

One reason we kept our pigs was because they ploughed the garden for us. More importantly, though, we really like pork and bacon.

So we fattened our two pigs until the designated time when they were killed with a bolt gun, hung from the front loader of the tractor and bled by cutting their throats. We then poured kettle after kettle of scalding water over them and scraped away all hair and skin from the carcasses.

Then they were disembowelled, cut into quarters and hung. Some meat was cured and made fine hams and bacon. The blood was turned into tasty black puddings, a messy process in which we received more help than we necessarily wanted from our young children, who seemed unfazed by the transition of Pinky and Spotty into meat, sausages and black pudding.

I have no problem with my children learning about the source of their food, provided they respect all animals, wild or domestic. Indeed, I can think of nothing more natural and wholesome than rearing and processing your own meat. You certainly know exactly what has gone into its production, which is more than can be said of meat you buy from a supermarket.

But in this country we are so far removed from the process of food production that the idea of killing our own meat is to many now beyond consideration.

Most are more than happy to eat meat, provided the responsibility for dispatching the animal lies with someone else.

Traditional rural practices are now outwith the ken of not just the urban majority, but also the many people who have moved out to the rural commuter belts but never get their hands dirty. For most, the only contact they have with rural Britain is the occasional holiday there.

Supermarket bought, their food is presented in a sanitised form with little to link it to its agricultural source. Vegetables are neatly packaged in pristine condition, meat is processed into sausages or burgers.

What horror if the average housewife found a slug or some mud in her iceberg lettuce or if above the meat counter there was hung a full side of pig, trotters and all, recognisable as its living progenitor.

And if the public closes its eyes to the living, breathing source of its food, it closes its mind to those who produce it. Despite the fact that UK farmers grow some remarkably fine produce, they do not have a very good reputation with the (urban) public.

There is an image generated by media coverage and Viz cartoon strips of grumpy subsidy junkies intolerant of anyone who steps on their land, who received obscenely large compensation for livelihoods lost to foot and mouth, yet always find something to complain about.

Undoubtedly, some farming practices have had an adverse effect on our wildlife. But farmers have by and large been responding to the lead given by the government and the European Union, which has encouraged production at the expense, if necessary, of our hedgerows, flora and fauna.

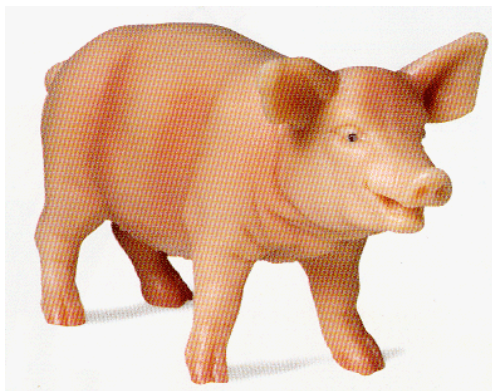
Charities that rely on donations for their existence need scare stories to trigger funding campaigns.

When it comes to rural practices and traditions, there is a tendency among Britain's population, government and scientific bodies to point the finger and condemn bad practice, without really understanding what constitutes good practice.

It may shock many to learn that we routinely castrate our calves, chop the tails off young lambs and ring chickens' necks. I will even, if I have to, kill animals closer to townspeople's hearts.

The countryside is not a wilderness, but is constantly reacting to the impact of man. Management of the countryside is all a

question of balance and if any element becomes too dominant, intervention is required to restore that balance.



Like the ubiquitous rat, these are things that the average civilised citizens would rather not spend time pondering over their breakfast tables. But they are part of country life. And as a society we need to understand them

if we are genuinely to understand why situations such as Ormiston are shocking.

Education is urgently required. Without it, the gap between town and country will continue to open like a chasm, and inevitable conflict between these two interests will always end with the countryside as the loser.

ECJ backs Asda in ham dispute

25 Apr 2002

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has officially agreed with UK supermarket group Asda that it has a right to sell Parma ham on its deli counter that has been sliced and packaged in the UK.

An Italian Parma ham trade association first argued in court in November 1997 that, in order to be called Parma ham, the product has to have been sliced and packaged in the Parma region where it originated.

Asda meanwhile argued that where the meat is sliced and packaged is not important, and slicing its delicatessen Parma ham in stores in UK is a move to make the prices more competitive for consumers.

The judge at the ECJ agreed with Asda in his initial "opinion", however the final verdict will not be known for several months.



Sunlight

Working in Partnership with the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders



- Preferred supplier of workwear to all members
- Food Trade standard – coats, boilersuits, trousers
- Humpers Smock, Hats, Butchers Bib Apron, Waist Apron
 - Any many more items

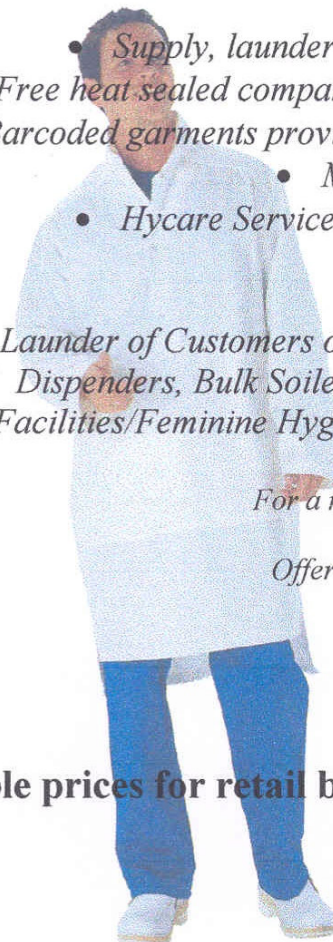
Service includes:

- Supply, launder and repair of workwear
- Free heat sealed company logo (up to 3 colours)
- Barcoded garments providing service history and
 - Management information
 - Hycare Service for food trade garments

Launder of Customers own Workwear, Garment Dispensers, Bulk Soiled Collectors, Washroom Facilities/Feminine Hygiene, Floorcare Services

*For a representative to contact you
Call 0800 616691*

*Offer applies to new and renewed
Contracts only*



Unbelievable prices for retail butchers



Imperialism reigns at Safeway

In the glare of much publicity, the Metric Martyrs in the North East of England failed in their efforts to continue selling their goods in imperial weights. While Safeway Stores comply with legislation selling product in kilos and grams, their point of sale material is predominantly pounds and ounces.

Following up a member's complaint registered at the last Bellshill Regional meeting in February the Federation weighed in to investigate the descriptions made within Safeway Stores. We found that the ticketing and shelf descriptions were as required by law: predominately metric with accompanying imperial comparisons.

Advertising within the store and in their mega deal leaflets was however largely imperial weight/price description. In a letter from the Customer Service Department of Safeway's Kent office the retailer states:

"We are aware of the legislation and for the time being will continue to use the price per 1lb. As the lead statement. We will also continue to give metric statements."

This involves large print p per lb. and small print p per kilo. Hayley Martin from Safeways explained their reasons:

"We have taken into account the stance taken by our competitors, giving prominence to imperial statements. In this connection we are not prepared to put ourselves at any commercial disadvantage."

Attracted to a product by an imperial special offer notice, it is confusing to the customer to be met by a metric shelf ticket.

Holidays: jubilation or tribulation

Four weeks plus nine statutory days public holidays is the industry agreed norm for holiday entitlement and this is included in the Contracts of Employment and the Staff Rules and Procedures Handbook issued by the Federation. An updated version of the Staff Rules Handbook was distributed with the April Newsletter.

When an extra public holiday such as the Jubilee day in June is announced there is no requirement to give that day if you are already granting the nine statutory public holidays. Many retailers have moved their public holidays to enable 3rd June to be used as a public holiday.

Where employers are not using the SFMTA contracts of employment and staff handbook, the eligibility to public holidays depends what is in the contract.

We are aware of some members whose contracts give three weeks holiday plus nine days public holidays or four weeks holiday including public holidays. Check the details of your contract

If there is no contract of employment then this might cause some grief and complaint.

Federation staff rules and procedures are available from SFMTA free of charge.

Telephone advice is available from Gordon Kerr Smith, the Federation's Employment Law Advisor telephone 01369 702277 see page 45 of the 2002/03 Handbook.

Please note if you use a solicitor to draw up your contract of employment etc it may cost you much more than you are paying for membership of SFMTA.

Caught on camera!

Speeding and parking tickets are becoming something of an occupational hazard for many employees. What are the key legal issues and, if you pay the penalty, what's the tax position?

Dangerous driving

The latest figures we've seen show that annually, around 960,000 speed limit offences are prosecuted. In addition, there are nearly 2.2 million tickets issued for parking, waiting and obstruction-type offences. The figures are only set to rise. Recently the government gave the go-ahead for countless more speed cameras to be installed. Controversially, the local police forces will be able to keep the revenue these cameras generate rather than have to pass it on to HM Treasury.

On the job. Whatever you might think about speeding (and other motoring offences), the point is that people at or on their way to work commit the majority of offences. Just think about your delivery drivers. They're under pressure to get the goods to the customer who might be anxiously awaiting their order. If they have to park on a double yellow line or apply a heavy right foot to the accelerator to make that delivery, what do you care? Like many employers, you probably accept the penalties as a cost of running the business (we're talking about minor offences here only). *But what about the legal and tax issues?*

Legal position

Although the employee is on company business, as far as the criminal law is concerned, he is personally liable for his own actions. *Even if under pressure from his boss?* Yes. Other than in extreme cases, it will always be the driver's responsibility to respect the law.

However, when it comes to the penalty, evidence of pressure from the employer may amount to mitigating circumstances – but certainly not a defence. The majority of motoring offences are what's called strict liability – there's no defence as such.

Even if the offence was committed on company time, it's the employee's legal responsibility. If you pay the fine, declare it as a benefit-in-kind to be able to claim a tax deduction.

Employer to the defence If the employee is caught speeding on camera, the first thing you'll know of it is some paperwork arriving at the office. As all the authorities have to go on at this stage is a registration number, they're seeking to ascertain who the driver was at the time of the alleged incident.

Must you reply? Yes. As the registered keeper of the vehicle, it's a legal requirement. *Could you volunteer another driver?* Suppose your best salesman is already on nine points. Another three and he'll be off the road for six months under the totting-up provisions.

So what's the harm in someone else with no points taking the rap? It's an option. But perverting the court of justice is a very serious offence, so not something we'd recommend!

Police intervention. If the employee is stopped at the roadside for speeding, one of three things will happen. He'll be let off with a slap on the wrist, he'll be issued with a fixed penalty notice or he'll be told to expect a summons to court through the post (in the more serious cases). Here, the first you'll hear of it is a request to pay the fine!

Tax Position

Paying the speeding and parking fines of your employees is OK. *As it's a business expense, can't you deduct the cost against profit?* No. For public policy reasons the Taxman won't allow it. But there is a way around it.

Tip. If the employee claims the fine as, e.g. "expenses", declare it as a benefit-in-kind on his P11D under "Travelling and Subsistence". The employee will be taxed on the benefit, e.g. 22% on a £60 fine, and you'll pay NI on it too, but overall, everyone should be better off. That way it's a legitimate business expense that you can claim a deduction for.

Labels that lie?

24 Apr 2002

Consumers' Association 'names and shames' food label cheats, and challenges the FSA to highlight bad practice

Consumers' Association (CA) revealed new details of food products which are confusing and sometimes misleading for consumers, and called on manufacturers to make their product labels honest and clear. It also laid down a challenge to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to encourage companies to implement better labelling guidelines, and to start to expose bad practice. CA's labelling concerns include:

- **Ingredients** - at the moment, manufacturers don't have to tell you about all of the ingredients they use. There is also no requirement for the ingredients in alcoholic drinks to be labelled, though some retailers, such as the Co-op, do provide ingredients labelling voluntarily. They found many labels that were misleading when it came to describing the product. McVitie's Butter Puffs for instance, contain no butter, but are made from wheat flour and vegetable oil. Golden Wonder prawn cocktail flavour crisps do not list salt or sodium as an ingredient, but Golden Wonder confirmed they contain salt in the flavouring.
- **Allergen labelling.** The EC is currently considering mandatory labelling of ingredients that could be allergens, including: cereals containing gluten, shellfish, eggs, fish, peanuts, soybeans, milk and dairy products containing lactose, nuts, and sesame seeds. At the moment, manufacturers who highlight allergens do so voluntarily.
- **'Low fat'** should mean that the product has less than 3g of fat per 100g (1). Consumers say that they find the term '% fat-free' confusing. But we still found products (such as Bernard Matthews cooked turkey), advertised as '92% fat free'. Yeo Valley organic healthy crème fraiche is 17.5% fat, and Walkers Lites! (crisps) are 22% fat.
CA is calling for nutrition claims to be defined in legislation.
- It is illegal for products to make **health claims** that are misleading, but many manufacturers seem to refer to health benefits as a marketing gimmick - for example Tetley tea being good for your heart, and Flora pro.active spread which claims it is 'clinically proven to dramatically reduce cholesterol'. CA is calling for the EU to introduce legislation on health claims, including a system of prior approval, so that consumers know whether or not manufacturers can back up their claims.
- **Country of origin.** For the majority of foods (apart from beef and veal), consumers have no definitive indication of where it has come from. The Food Standards Agency is currently consulting on extending guidance to include place of origin for products, and ingredients, in products that are of most interest for consumers such as meat and dairy produce. CA is calling for information about country of origin to be as comprehensive and specific as possible.
- At the moment, only those ingredients which have detectable levels of **GM DNA** or protein in the end-product have to be labelled as GM. But consumers want to know if GM derived ingredients have been used (eg soya oil) - the EU must ensure that labelling reflects this.
- **Poor nutrition labelling** (too many cases where there is little or no information about the 'full eight' nutrients: energy, protein, carbohydrate, sugar, fat, saturates, fibre and sodium, although this is not currently required by law). Bottles of Coca-Cola, tins of Spam, and Old El Paso cheese salsa had no nutrition information on their labels. CA is calling for mandatory nutrition labelling that is easily comparable between products, with guideline daily amounts.

Which? magazine recently revealed that many labels do not reflect the actual content of the product - for instance Princes crab paste which is mostly mackerel and cod, with just 11% crab.

Sheila McKechnie, Director of *Consumers' Association*, said:

"Some manufacturers are getting away with seriously misleading descriptions about the contents of their food products. They must stop trying to fool consumers and be more honest about their goods."

Some of the of misleading labels the Consumers Association's shopping trawl uncovered include:

Using '%fat free'

- McVities Go Ahead Spring Onion Crinklins (KP Foods) - '85% fat free' - so 15% fat content
- Jacob's Vitalinea Fig Rolls (Danone) - '94% fat free' - so 6% fat content
- McVitie's Go Ahead Golden Crunch (KP Foods) - '90% fat free' - so 10% fat
- Quaker Snack a jacks (Quaker Oats Ltd) - 'Less than 10% fat' on label
- Merchant Gourmet plain toasted croutons - '85% fat free' on label - so 15% fat
- Bernard Matthews cooked turkey - wafer thin (Bernard Matthews Foods) - '95% fat free'

Low fat claims

- Walkers Lites! - Advertised as 33% less fat, but contains 22% fat, so not a product low in fat
- Sainsbury's Be Good to Yourself 2 Garlic Baguettes - '25% less fat' on label - but still contains 14% fat (11.9g per half baguette)
- Yeo Valley Organic healthy eating crème fraîche (Yeo Valley Organic Company) - Claims to be 'healthy', but contains 17.5% fat
- Spam Lite and Spam (Tulip international) - 'Lite' version contains 17% fat. 'Lite' version claims 25% less fat and salt, but normal version has no nutrition labelling, so impossible to compare
- Asda Ham and Mustard Quiche - Part of their 'Good for You' range, but still contains 11% fat and 47% of calories in this product are from fat

Ingredients

- McVitie's Butter Puffs - Contain no butter, just vegetable oil
- Vale Fine Foods Fresh Sandwich Filler - Tuna and Sweetcorn (Zorba chilled foods) - Main ingredient is mayonnaise
- Bernard Matthews chicken breast - (Bernard Matthews Foods Ltd) - only 62% chicken
- Princes Crab paste - More mackerel (39%), cod (20%), and water, than crab (11%)
- Safeway Tuna and Onion paste - Also contains 20% cod
- Safeway Salmon and shrimp paste - More mackerel (30%), cod (15%) and water than shrimp (3%)
- Safeway chicken and vegetables savoury rice - Contains 82% rice, 6% dried vegetables, chicken is unquantified, but appears near the bottom of the list just before herbs
- Paxo Celebration sausagemeat and thyme - Ingredients in order are: rusk, wholemeal breadcrumbs, mechanically recovered dried turkey (minimum 8%)
- Sainsbury's special recipe stuffing mix, sausagemeat - Ingredients in order are: rusk, breadcrumbs, dried turkey powder (8.5%) - not what consumers understand as sausagemeat
- Pure (spread) (Matthews foods plc) - 'Pure' has a picture of a sunflower on the front, but also contains palm oil. Contains 55% sunflower oil
- Fruit Bowl fruit flakes (Stream Foods Ltd) - Claims to be 'natural colour, good for energy, low in fat', but doesn't mention that it is high in sugar (80g per 100g)
- Heinz ham sandwich filler - Only contains 20% ham. Water is the main ingredient
- Ocean Spray Pure Juice Cranberry with Grape and Apple (Gerber Foods Soft Drinks Ltd) - Contains 50% grape, 28% apple, and 22% cranberry

Misleading product pictures

- Dolmio Carbonara - No nutrition labelling. Also, picture of whole cheese on front of product, but only contains cheese powder
- Knorr Tastebreaks Pasta Carbonara (Bestfoods UK Ltd) - Large pieces of ham shown on product label, but only contains 1.2% cured ham
- Knorr Taste Breaks pasta, creamy chicken and herb (Bestfoods UK Ltd) - Chicken features significantly in picture on label, but product only contains 1% chicken

Opinion examined in Schools

A report was published earlier this year of the research under taken by the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC), examining knowledge about basic food safety and hygiene principles among school pupils in Scotland. This report may be of interest to butchers.



In recent years there have been a number of food safety incidents that have received high levels of media attention, and consumers in Scotland have witnessed many food-related problems. These have included the crisis surrounding Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (nvCJD). There has also been concern over salmonella poisoning from bacterium linked to eggs and poultry and E.coli 0157 infection from cooked meat and dairy products. In Belgium there have been problems associated with dioxin contamination in pork, poultry and dairy products. As a result, public confidence in food standards and safety has been eroded.

The SCC believes concern from consumers is justified. In 1996 notified cases of food poisoning peaked at 5396 cases¹ in Scotland. This had risen from 2438 in 1986 and represents an increase of 45% in 10 years.

Importantly, this included the role of parents and guardians in instructing children in personal hygiene measures. The Group also suggested that "Additional measures could include, for example, giving appropriate emphasis to food safety in teaching in schools, in out of school classes and in other courses" and went on to recommend "Food hygiene training should be provided wherever possible within the primary and secondary school curriculum".

Aims: In light of food poisoning trends over the past few years and the acknowledgement of the Pennington Group of the important role that consumers have in food safety, the aim of this research was to examine the knowledge about basic food safety and hygiene principles among a subgroup of the school population in Scotland.

A second objective was to collate information to provide baseline data, which could be used in the future to determine progress in this important area.

The SCC opted to target 13 and 14 year olds as a subsection of the school population. There were a number of reasons for choosing to focus on this age group – they are likely to have been taught home economics at school; they are likely to undertake some cooking at home; they are generally split into classes of mixed ability pupils and, in practical terms, they are not undergoing any major exams.

Methodology A questionnaire survey was devised and disseminated to second year school pupils across Scotland. The questions related to a range of food safety and hygiene issues. The response rate to the questionnaire was high, with 108 schools (65%) out of 166 initially approached taking part in the research.

The respondents represent a good cross-section of the population of Scotland and the results are based on 2210 completed and useable questionnaires. Importantly, just under 80% of the pupils surveyed said they cook at home, with 40% of these cooking at least once a day.

Based on the research carried out for the summary report the SCC make the following **recommendations**:

1. The Food Standards Agency needs to determine what are the most significant of the top ten messages in relation to food safety and hygiene. It is then necessary to determine what are the most appropriate methods of informing the public and whether there should be a focus on individual messages or collective messages.
2. The Food Standards Agency needs to make food safety and hygiene messages clear and relevant and understandable to pupils, parents and guardians, and teachers. To do this, appropriate materials and resources need to be provided in schools. Out of school clubs and organisations, which inform young people about food safety issues, should also have access to appropriate material.
3. The Scottish Executive and the Food Standards Agency should use this study as baseline data and repeat the research with an adult group. This will have a number of benefits. It will allow a comparison between the knowledge of adults in relation to pupils to determine the level of knowledge among the general population of Scotland as a whole. This will enable the monitoring of change through time, and the impact or effectiveness of future initiatives to improve knowledge of food safety and hygiene can be tracked through time. It will also enable a focusing of the most significant food safety and hygiene messages and whether there are merits in prioritising these.
4. Additionally, head teachers can use this study as a Scotland-wide benchmark with which to review the performance of pupils in their school and to monitor change in pupils' knowledge over time.
5. Agencies concerned with public health, including the Scottish Executive, the Food Standards Agency and the Health Education Board for Scotland, need to place greater emphasis on enabling parents and guardians to get across food safety and hygiene messages at home. To do this, parents and guardians need to be made aware of the importance of the issue and what good practice involves. The Food Standards Agency has an important role in determining the adequacy of the current knowledge among consumers and working to improve this knowledge.
6. The Food Standards Agency needs to review the clarity of food labels and decide whether there are clear public health benefits by requiring that key food safety and hygiene messages form part of the food label.

Handbook

Sorry somehow or other we manage to omit two members and one corporate member from the lists printed in the 2002/03 Handbook

Connell Cranston, 134 Nithsdale Road, Glasgow
Ian Adams, 132 Windmillhill Street, Motherwell

Corporate Members: correction

Omitted: **Paragon Products**, Newhailes Industrial Estate, Newhailes Road, Musselburgh
0131 653 2222

Telephone number correction:

East of Scotland Contracts, Ferryhills Road, Inverkeithing. Tel 01383 418610

Sincere apologies for the inconvenience caused.

REHIS Certificate in Essential Hygiene

Coming Soon to the following venues:-

Essential Hygiene	Venue
One day courses will be held on the following dates	
Tuesday 11 th June	Perth
Tuesday 18 th June	Glasgow
Wednesday 3 rd July	Wishaw
Wednesday 10 th July	Inverurie

REHIS Certificate in Elementary Health and Safety

This course is ideal for all employees and aims to ensure that candidates operate in a safe manner. The course lasts for six hours delivered on the one day.

Successful candidates are awarded the Elementary Health and Safety Certificate from the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland

Health & Safety Courses	Venue
One day courses will be held on the following dates	
Tuesday 14 th May	Monkton
Wednesday 15 th May	Melrose
Tuesday 2 ^{1st} May	Dundee
Wednesday 22nd May	Wishaw
Tuesday 28 th May	Aberdeen
Wednesday 29 th May	Glasgow
Tuesday 11 th June	Dumfries
Tuesday 18 th June	Elgin
Wednesday 19 th June	Edinburgh

To reserve your place on any of the above telephone Lynn on 01738 637785

More information at www.foodtraining.net

Details of FSA (UK) open board meeting

Next Scheduled Board meeting

9th May 2002

Hilton Aberdeen Treetops, Aberdeen



The Board of the Food Standards Agency holds meetings in public, and publishes Board meeting agendas, papers and decisions ...

Open meetings of the FSA Board give the public an opportunity to see how the Board goes about discussing the Agency's policies and reviewing its work.