



THE SCOTTISH OFFICE

National Health Service in Scotland Management Executive

St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Colleague

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD: REPORT ON SALMONELLA IN EGGS

Summary

1. This letter is to draw your attention to a report recently published by the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food entitled "Salmonella In Eggs". This report contains recommendations of relevance to catering in the National Health Service.

Background

2. The report concludes that, although only a small percentage of eggs are contaminated with salmonella, millions of eggs are sold every day and eggs are therefore an important source of human infection - even though their contribution to current levels of human salmonellosis cannot be quantified precisely.

3. A summary of the report's recommendations and the Government's response is given in the attached annex. General managers may wish to note the following recommendations which have been endorsed by the Government.

3.1 People should avoid eating raw eggs or uncooked foods made from them and vulnerable people such as the elderly, the sick, babies and pregnant women should consume only eggs which have been cooked until the white and yolk are solid.

3.2 Once purchased, eggs should be stored in the refrigerator, below 8°C, both in the home and in catering premises. This recommendation supersedes advice issued in 1988 that eggs should be stored in a cool, dry place.

15 February 1993

Addressees

For action:
General Managers,
Health Boards

Chief Executives of
NHS Trusts

General Manager,
State Hospital

For Information:
General Manager, CSA

To be copied to Unit
General Managers and
Catering Services
Managers for Action

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3.3 Caterers should continue to increase their use of pasteurised egg, particularly for dishes that are not subject to further cooking prior to consumption.

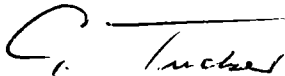
3.4 Food hygiene training programmes should pay particular attention to the correct handling of eggs and food containing eggs and the avoidance of cross contamination.

Action

4. General Managers, Chief Executives and Catering Services managers should review catering procedures and take such action as may be necessary.

5. Copies of the report are available from HMSO, 71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9AZ or through any bookseller (price £5.85).

Yours sincerely



G W TUCKER
Directorate of Strategic Management

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY REPORT ON
SALMONELLA IN EGGS**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION

RESPONSE

(The numbers refer to the numbering of the recommendations and paragraphs in the Report).

ADVICE TO CONSUMERS

8.1 We endorse the advice given by the Chief Medical Officer in 1988 that:

8.1 The Government welcomes this endorsement.

"people should avoid eating raw eggs or uncooked foods made from them and that vulnerable people such as the elderly, the sick, babies and pregnant women should consume only eggs which have been cooked until white and yolk are solid".

HANDLING AND STORAGE OF EGGS

8.2 We recommend that eggs should be consumed within 3 weeks of lay.

8.2 The Government endorses this general advice.

8.3 We recommend that eggs should be labelled with a use-by date and that retailers should encourage the industry to mark egg packs with this date and extend the date marking to the eggs themselves.

8.3 The Government is disposed to accept this recommendation on egg packs. It is consulting industry and consumer interests on the use of date markings and storage instructions on packs and eggs. It will, if necessary, seek changes in EC legislation.

8.4 We recommend that once purchased, eggs should be stored in the refrigerator, below 8°C both in the home and in catering premises. We further recommend that the labelling of eggs should include storage information.

8.4 The Government endorses these recommendations on good practice in storage. Existing provisions require that food labels should indicate any special storage conditions which need to be observed if the food is to remain in good condition. The Government is informing egg packers of the Committee's views as part of the consultation mentioned above.

8.5 We recommend that the Government should seek to increase public awareness of the correct way to store eggs both in the home and in catering premises.

8.6 We recommend that the industry, together with the retailers, should draw up a code of practice for the handling and storage of eggs during the egg production chain from point of lay to retail. This code, which should take account of the EC Regulations, would be of benefit to all those involved in the production and marketing of eggs.

USE OF PASTEURISED EGG

8.7 We recommend that caterers should continue to increase their use of pasteurised egg, particularly for dishes which are not subject to further cooking prior to consumption

8.8 We recommend that manufacturers and retailers, together with consumer organisations, should consider how best to encourage consumers to use pasteurised egg instead of shell egg, where appropriate.

TRAINING OF FOOD HANDLERS

8.9 We recommend that food hygiene training programmes should pay particular attention to the correct handling of eggs and food containing eggs and the avoidance of cross-contamination.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MONITORING/REPORTING OF OUTBREAKS OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS

8.5 The Government accepts this recommendation. It is informing caterers of the Committee's views as part of the consultation mentioned above; it will incorporate them in its own advisory materials as soon as practicable and it is drawing them to the attention of others who issue similar material.

8.6 The Government accepts this recommendation and is consulting the industry on how it may best be implemented.

8.7 and 8.8 The Government endorses these recommendations, and is consulting industry and consumer interests on how these recommendations may best be followed up so as to increase awareness of the availability of pasteurised egg.

8.9 The Government endorses this recommendation and is drawing it to the attention of industry and training bodies.

8.10 We therefore recommend that the Departments of Health in the UK should consider ways of improving the quality of investigations of out-breaks and their documentation.

8.11 We recommend that the new CDSC reporting forms should be used to report investigations of food poisoning outbreaks as fully as possible.

8.12 We recommend that the Steering Group on the Microbiological Safety of Food: Human Epidemiology Working Group should identify suitable mechanisms by which epidemiological investigations of sporadic cases could be undertaken to improve identification of sources and vehicles of infection and consider whether such studies could be undertaken cost-effectively.

GOVERNMENT MEASURE FOR THE CONTROL OF SALMONELLA IN POULTRY

8.13 We therefore recommend that the Government review the continuing need for the compulsory slaughter of laying flocks infected with Salmonella enteritidis.

8.14 We believe that the recommendation from the "Richmond" Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food on guidelines on the hygienic design of broilerhouses should now be extended to the design of henhouses, but that the guidelines should be prepared by industry in close consultation with the Government. We recommend that these guidelines should cover the design, construction and maintenance of buildings for breeding and egg laying flocks, with particular regard to effective cleansing and disinfection between flocks and minimising introduction of infection to birds.

8.10 and 8.11 The Government accepts both these recommendations. Consultants in Communicable Disease Control with expertise in the investigation of outbreaks of communicable disease have been appointed by Health Boards to assist local authorities in their statutory duties. In addition Government has set up an informal Working Party to produce guidance to all investigating officers on the management of and reporting of food-borne illness.

8.12 The Steering Group will be asked to take account of this recommendation when developing its future work programme.

8.13 The Government accepts this recommendation and proposes that the compulsory slaughter of laying flocks should be ended if it is consulting industry and consumer interests on the implications of this decision.

8.14 The Government accepts this recommendation and is consulting the industry on its implementation.

8.15 We recommend that MAFF, in consultation with the industry, should consider updating the 1988 MAFF/British Poultry Federation Code of Practice on the Control of Salmonellae in Commercial Laying Flocks and the 1988 Code of Practice for Poultry Health Scheme Members on the Control of Salmonellae (paragraph 3.8).

8.16 In order to progress recommendations 8.13 to 8.15 above, we recommend that a liaison team should be set up by Government to monitor the progress of the industry towards the goal of reducing the incidence of salmonella in poultry. The work of the team will be primarily for industry with the Government acting as a catalyst.

RESEARCH AND SURVEILLANCE

8.17 In order to improve the understanding of the sources of Salmonella enteritidis and possible routes of infection for human disease, we recommend that Government should commission further research in the following areas:-

1. sub-typing of Salmonella enteritidis for epidemiological purposes (paragraph 2.28);
2. the survival of Salmonella enteritidis and other Salmonella species on the hands; shells of intact eggs; equipment and work surfaces (paragraphs 4.4 and 6.16);
3. effects of storing eggs at ambient and refrigeration temperatures on the survival of Salmonella enteritidis (paragraphs 4.7 and 7.13); and
4. the integrity of albumen in relation to age and the effect of refrigeration on the preservation of egg quality (paragraph 7.15).

8.15 The Government accepts this recommendation. Discussions with industry are underway.

8.16 The Government accepts this recommendation. It will establish and chair an industry liaison team and is inviting interested parties to nominate representatives.

8.17 The Government has already initiated further research on the sub-typing of Salmonella enteritidis which should aid epidemiological studies. It agrees that there is a need for further work on factors which could affect the survival of salmonellas in storage and the potential for cross-contamination in the kitchen. It will consider further how to accommodate such studies within the national programmes of food safety research and surveillance.

8.18 In addition we recommend that more work should be done on kitchen practice in the domestic and catering environment (paragraph 6.15) and that Government should seek to use the results of such work to target its public information on good hygiene practice.

8.18 The Government already funds studies on kitchen practices at the University of Strathclyde and the Cardiff Institute of Higher Education. In addition, the Steering Group on the Microbiological Safety of Food is planning a preliminary study on possible cross-contamination sites in the catering environment. The need for further work will be considered when the results of these studies are known. The Government will update and target its food safety information as necessary to take account of studies of this kind.

8.19 We recommend that the Government should undertake more research to determine whether competitive exclusion could have a useful role to play in minimising the risk of Salmonella enteritidis infection in laying flocks (paragraph 3.9)

8.19 The Government has devoted significant resources to the development of competitive exclusion techniques for broilers. It will consider further whether the research recommended here is more suitable for Government or industry funding.

SURVEILLANCE STUDIES

8.20 We recommend that Government should consider funding regular surveys on the incidence of Salmonella enteritidis in imported eggs and UK eggs on retail sale (paragraph 4.15).

8.20 The Steering Group on the Microbiological Safety of Food will take account of this recommendation when developing its future work programme.