



Review of FSA Response to Incident of Contamination of Beef Products with horse and pork meat and DNA

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Introduction

- Terms of Reference
- Method
- Findings
- Recommendations



Terms of Reference

To review the response by the Food Standards Agency to incidents of the adulteration of comminuted beef products with horse and pig meat and DNA , and to make recommendations to the FSA Board on the relevant capacity and capabilities of the FSA and any actions that should be taken to maintain or build them.



Terms of Reference

- Response to prior intelligence
- Internal response structures and procedures and their operation.
- Communication
- Engagement with all partners and stakeholders
- Enforcement response and powers
- Other emerging lessons



Approach

- Review of documentation
 - Minutes of all key meetings
 - Incident Response Protocol
 - Incident documentation and review
 - Reports, internal and external
 - Briefing paper
 - Press releases, cuttings, social media, analysis, websites
 - Correspondence



Approach

- Interviews (around 35, 50 people)
 - Wide Range FSA staff
 - Government Departments and Ministers
 - Food Safety Authority of Ireland
 - Industry – trade bodies & retailers
 - Local Authority bodies
 - Which?
 - Others



Findings: Prior Intelligence

Did anyone spot this coming?

- Generally recognised that meat a high value product open to adulteration but within UK equine meat not considered
- FSA has ‘emerging risks’ process and Fraud Unit
 - ***Need for wider programme, plus horizon scanning***
- Early notification of programme from FSAI, and informed once results validated
 - Led to response from FSA



Findings: FSA Response

Early response

- SIMT met on the 15th
 - Followed Protocol
 - Agreed FSA would lead
 - Set up scoping meeting
 - Four point plan published on the 16th
- But some hesitancy within the Agency
 - Not food safety with major health impact so lack of appreciation of impact
 - Some with limited experience of major incidents
 - Wait and see v precautionary principle
 - Uncertainty of role



Findings: FSA Response

Role of FSA

- Govt. departments and SIMT clear FSA in the lead
- Some staff not clear
- Many outside responders confused at first because of 2010 changes, compounded by joint meetings



Findings: FSA Response

Role of FSA

Role described in 2010 on FSA website

- “food safety incidents, including misleading labelling and food fraud with possible food safety implications”

Role in Cabinet Office Briefing

- ”The FSA also handles food related incidents”

Potential for 2 Models of response

Within the Agency did not make material difference to response, particularly after early stages



Findings: FSA Response

- **Early February**

- 6th February Announcement of UK wide sampling with Local Authority
- 7th February, announced industry testing
- Situation now more complex and needed increase of tempo
 - Local authority testing
 - Industry Sampling
 - Audit of meat premises
 - Enforcement action
 - Regular briefing needed
 - Media
 - Later added Europe



Findings: FSA Response

- Protocol not sufficient
- Arrangements for managing incident changed
 - Daily stocktake meetings, senior staff with Defra and Cabinet Office,
 - Daily 'Bird Tables', short round up meetings with stakeholders
 - Incident Situation Reports
 - Briefing Cell
 - Senior people leading each aspect of incident
- Some internal concern about changes, insufficient internal communication

Nevertheless, these arrangements worked well and incident then effectively managed



Findings: FSA Response

- Investigation of premises
 - Became widespread and complex
 - Involved liaison with a number of Local Authorities
 - Links with several police forces
 - Some links worked better than others
 - Highlighted limitations in powers
 - Raised issues of capacity and training



Findings: FSA Response

- FSA Protocol not sufficient for major incident
- Need to build on new arrangements for Major Incident Plan
 - Strategic Director
 - Operational Director
 - Command and Control
 - Operations room
 - Information management
 - Standing Operating Procedures
 - Communications
 - Increase resilience
- Develop with Partners and Practice



Findings: Communication

- External
 - Media
 - Social Media
 - Website
- With stakeholders
- Internal



Findings: Communication

- **Media**

- A few negative comments, such as language used or early apparent 'certainty' on safety
- Majority respondents positive
- Main presence TV and radio
- Good check of reception of key messages through social media and independent survey
- Local staff led media in all 4 countries



Findings: Communication

- Social media
 - Well understood and used
 - Need understanding of importance across the Agency
- Website
 - Difficult to keep up
 - Some concerns about difficulty finding key findings
- Issues of capacity



Findings: Communication

- **Internal**

- those involved
 - Should be through cascade of briefing
- those not involved
 - Intranet, briefings
- Insufficient early on
- Recognised needed to improve and introduced changes
- Excellent situation report developed



Findings: Stakeholder Engagement

- DEFRA, DH, Cabinet Office, other Govt. Departments, Devolved Govts.
- Local Authorities
- Other Agencies, Professional Bodies
- Industry



Findings: Stakeholder Engagement

- Worked well with DEFRA and other Govt. Departments
 - DEFRA and Cabinet Office attended Stocktake meetings
 - Good joint working in Europe
- Local staff worked well with Devolved Administrations



Findings: Stakeholder Engagement

- Local Authorities
 - Generally worked well, with most LAs very responsive
 - But raises questions of FSA powers in a national incident
- Other Agencies and Professional Bodies
 - Not involved early on
 - Could have offered support
 - Contacted by media, could have taken some of the pressure



Findings: Stakeholder Engagement

Industry

- Confused about lead
- Appreciated enforcement role of FSA and need to restore confidence
- But found joint meetings confrontational
- Understood need for testing, but felt views on this not heard
- Found Bird Tables very helpful
- Appreciated 1% threshold
- Overall thought FSA managed well
- Willing to contribute to intelligence

Need to consider balance enforcement role and collaboration



Powers

ability of the FSA to act

FSA relied on cooperation to manage the incident

- **National Incident**

- Should FSA have overriding agreement to run the incident, rather than relying on many Local Authorities?

- **Industry**

- FSA had no powers to require testing or receive information
- Should FSA be able to require industry to sample or give information?
- In general or only in an incident?
- What should be classed as a food business?



Powers

ability of the FSA to act

- ***Enforcement***
 - ***Powers need review e.g. powers of entry limited***
- ***Potential approaches***
 - ***Code of conduct***
 - ***Framework agreement***
 - ***Changes in legislation***

Need to be worked through on a collaborative basis



Intelligence gathering

- All agree need to improve intelligence and wider scanning
- Learn from others, e.g. Emerging Health Risks programmes, police intelligence management
- Need wide range of inputs of intelligence
- Use of electronic systems e.g. Open Information Systems, Web Crawlers
- Good intelligence management
- Shared analysis and forward thinking
- Backed by sampling

Should be multiagency and across the sector



Key points to consider

- Improved intelligence system across the sector
- Development of Major Incident Plan
 - Infrastructure, training and practice, increased capacity for communication, stakeholder management
- Clarity of respective roles
- Review of 'powers'

All require collaborative working