

PROTECT – INVESTIGATION

DRAFT NOTE OF CHEMICAL HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK SURVEILLANCE (CHaIRS) GROUP MEETING

DATE & TIME: 23 FEB 2010 AT 1:30PM

VENUE: MEETING HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE

ATTENDEES

Terry Donohoe	(Chair)	Food Standards Agency
John Caseley (Secretary)	(JC)	Food Standards Agency
Beth Dunn	(BD)	Food Standards Agency
Jo Payne	(JP)	Veterinary Laboratories Agency
Steve Wyllie	(SW)	Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
David Harris	(DH)	Animal Health
Alison Gowers	(AG)	Environment Agency
Roger Hoare	(RH)	Environment Agency
Graham Urquhart	(GU)	Health Protection Agency
Martin Rose	(MR)	Food and Environment Research Agency
Martin Ball	(MB)	Health and Safety Executive
Paul Johnson	(PJ)	Health and Safety Laboratory

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence had been received from Ovnair Sepai (HPA), Trish Logie (Defra) and Chris Livesey (VLA). Four papers were sent out to members prior to the meeting (an agenda, a draft note of the 5TH CHaIRS Meeting on 2 December 2009, a revised terms of reference and membership for the group, and a draft CHaIRS first report).
2. The Chair asked members whether they were content that draft note of the December CHaIRS meeting was an accurate record. All members agreed that they were content with the note.

MATTERS ARISING

3. The Secretary provided a verbal update on matters arising from the last CHaIRS Group meeting in December, as follows:
 - At the December meeting there was discussion about raising the profile of CHaIRS. As a first step, the Secretariat was asked to find out about the publicity routes and communication methods used by the HAIRS¹ group. The Secretariat has established that prior to the HAIRS first report (covering 2004-07) which was published in 2008, an article covering the work of the group was published in the Veterinary Record (in 2005).
 - In connection with discussions on ragwort poisoning at the last meeting, specifically regarding the production of an advisory leaflet for farmers, it was agreed that further discussions were needed with Natural England to establish their position on this issue. Chris Livesey has spoken to Natural England and an update will be circulated by the Secretariat to members in due course.
- ACTION: JOHN CASELEY**
- One member requested at the last meeting that a contact list for all CHaIRS members should be circulated to the group. The Secretariat circulated this list to members on 9 December.

¹ The Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance Group (HAIRS)

- Another action was for the Secretariat to provisionally set dates for the 2010 CHaIRS Group meetings. Three further dates have now been booked in 2010.
- JC explained that another action from the December meeting was for HSE to provide EA with details of an expert from the Agriculture Inspectorate to provide input to the EA's Waste Protocol Team, and confirmed that his action has been completed.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WASTE PROTOCOLS PROGRAMME

4. RH updated members on the work of the EA's Waste Quality Protocols team, advising that the Waste Protocols Programme is currently considering materials classified as waste, and whether they pose a risk to the environment. As part of the programme, paper sludge ash and waste wood are being considered in terms of animal bedding. With regard to waste wood, this is currently being risk assessed in relation to human health and the environment, and comments from the CHaIRS group are welcomed. The following comments were received from members:
 - MB advised that Robert Hadway is taking the lead in HSE and can feed in any information regarding the agricultural sector.
 - SW asked if the risk assessment includes health and welfare of animals. RH confirmed that it does.
 - MR suggested that consideration should be given to the chemicals that waste wood is treated with and whether animals would be likely to consume.
 - JP advised that a number of previous animal poisoning cases have been caused due to animals consuming lead paint residues on wood chips. Additionally a tetanus outbreak occurred from nails in waste wood. SW added that nails also pose a risk to animals if swallowed, from an animal health perspective.
 - DH questioned whether cattle have been considered as part of the risk assessment. RH confirmed they had.
5. The group agreed to provide comments to JC on the paper provided by RH, once the paper had been circulated. JC agreed to co-ordinate a response to RH and the issue would then be further discussed.

ACTION: ALL MEMBERS

FSA UPDATE ON RESTRUCTURE

6. The Chair updated the group as follows regarding the FSA restructure:

- As part of the FSA restructure Food Protection Division has now been reorganized into Chemical Contaminants and Novel Foods Division (CCNFD) and Implementation and Delivery Division (IDD). The areas covered by each division are as follows:

Chemical Contaminants and Novel Foods Division

Comprised of 3 major work areas/units:

- CRAU: Chemical Risk Assessment Unit
- Novel Foods: GM
- Strategy and Policy

3 Policy Branches covering: Chemical and radiological contaminants, food irradiation, Veterinary Medicines, Pesticides, Biocides, Food Contact Materials, contaminated land.

1 Strategy Branch covering: Food defence, emerging risks horizon scanning and incorporating the former Incident Prevention work programme. The work programmes being developed on emerging risks and horizon scanning will include central gathering and sifting of information and intelligence using an software package(Memex) to generate options for action etc. The success of this work will require the expert input of stakeholders in generating and peer reviewing data The current constitution of the CHaIRS group would seem ideally suited to support these work areas, if members were willing.

Implementation and Delivery Division

- Incidents Unit takes the lead in emergency planning and responding to incidents.
 - Expanded incidents team takes the lead on managing response
 - New Incident Response Protocol has been published in February 2010.
 - Custodian of procedures and incidents' data.
 - Increasing use of data to inform horizon scanning/emerging risks work
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- The Agency has a new Strategic Plan covering 2010 – 2015. The new plan places greater emphasis on horizon scanning, emerging risks and intelligence gathering / sharing, and links to the original incident prevention aims. Global food chain analysis is also included.
 - Agency and Food Safety Group projects are currently underway regarding optimising stakeholder engagement. Early discussion is taking place with External Incident Prevention Board to realign its work in support of horizon scanning and emerging risks.
 - Wider developments that have taken place (post Buncefield / Flooding) have included the implementation of the following groups which all provide for cross-government information sharing for incidents and emergencies:
 - SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies)
 - STAG (Scientific and Technical Advisory Cells)
 - AIMS (Atmospheric Incident Management System)

CHAIRS GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

7. The Chair advised that the current ToR covers risk assessment, risk management as well as horizon scanning/emerging risks. As other cross-Government groups have developed since CHaIRS was established it would be useful to reconsider the group's role and how it can best contribute in future. The following comments were received from members:
- AG suggested that incident prevention and horizon scanning should be emphasized more in the terms of reference. SW added that the main role of the HaIRS group is horizon scanning. JC agreed to circulate a link to the HaIRS annual report to members.
- ACTION: JOHN CASELEY**
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- JP advised that trends are beginning to emerge from incidents e.g. animal bedding. A number of issues have been VLA driven and more balance was needed in terms of input from elsewhere. Additionally, the function of the group as a communications forum is also considered to be very beneficial. She added that the Littleport fire - where there had been delays in departments being notified - demonstrated a need for improved cross Government communications during incidents.
 - AG referred to previous discussions in relation to revisiting the SLA between FSA and EA, specifically regarding communications during incidents. JC advised that this work was on hold, pending the outcome of the current Defra Duty Room consultation.
 - GU referred to the Chemical Hazards and Poisons report, which looks at new science and technology, and also details the HPA's work with the EA. There are some useful outputs from this that can be fed into the group. GU agreed to provide JC with a link to the report to be circulated to the group.
- ACTION: GRAHAM URQUHART / JOHN CASELEY**
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8. The Chair requested that any further comments on the terms of reference, as well as suggestions for future work of the group, are sent to JC by the end of March, who will collate and circulate to members prior to further discussion. In view of the decision to review the group's terms of reference, it was agreed to 'park' discussion on the draft CHaIRS first report and forward work plan for the time being.
- ACTION: ALL MEMBERS**

[31(1)(g) and s31(2)(a) and (c)]

AOB

9. AG referred to work being carried out on lead shot, specifically a group being set up by Defra of non- governmental stakeholders. AG agreed to provide further details to JC.

ACTION: ALISON GOWERS

10. Two members commented that attending the meeting via teleconference was less effective than in person. Another member agreed with this however added that holding alternate meetings via teleconference was beneficial in terms of reducing travelling time. It was agreed to give further consideration to the format of future meetings.

**Beth Dunn
CHaIRS Secretariat
February 2010**