

CHEMICAL HAZARD IDENTIFICATION & RISK SURVEILLANCE GROUP (CHaIRS)

Terms of Reference – Revised March 2010:

To provide a forum for government organisations to share information in relation to chemical contamination incidents with the objective of improving communication and facilitating risk management.

- **Reporting incidents**

Suspected chemical contamination and poisoning incidents¹ are reported by VLA to identified “e-mailboxes” in Defra, Animal Health, FSA, HPA, EA, HSE/PSD, VMD, HSL and FERA.

This method of reporting ensures that these agencies are all aware of hazards being identified by VLA and can assess whether they need to follow up any of the incidents.

The emphasis at this early stage in the development of the new group is on reports from VLA to OGDs/Agencies. In the future it is hoped that others within the CHaIRS group will also notify the group of incidents which they become aware of, which may have implications for other group members.

- **Risk assessment**

Agencies/departments are responsible for risk assessments and risk management in the areas for which they have ‘lead’ responsibility.

The CHaIRS group will not routinely carry out risk assessments but the contacts from each department/agency will be available to contribute to risk assessments and co-operate on risk management when an incident affects multiple agencies or when a department / agency wishes to consult other group members. Most incidents will continue to be mainly or entirely FSA’s responsibility.

¹ These are primarily food safety incidents, which may in certain cases impact on other areas (e.g. human health, animal welfare, animal health, environment and operator safety)

- **Reviews**

There are periodic reviews of procedures and outcomes. Formal meetings alternate at present between those held face-to-face and via teleconference. Notes of reviews, meetings and actions are circulated to group members by Secretariat. It is anticipated that summaries will be published on the FSA website as soon as this can be arranged.

Frequency

- Quarterly

Key Work Areas and outputs

- Chemical hazard identification
- Confirm diagnosis, where possible, and otherwise describe a case definition
- Investigate and describe the release, contamination and evidence of exposure (especially residues in animal produce)
- Characterise the hazard in each circumstance. Risks vary with the physical and chemical presentation of chemical hazards (e.g. lead fragments ingested from discarded batteries may cause persistent residues in animal produce for several years whereas exposure to lead oxides in paint is usually cleared within four months).
- Preliminary risk evaluation
- Inform identified personnel of suspected chemical incidents
- Outputs of quarterly meetings to be reported to UK Zoonoses, Animal Diseases and Infections Group (UKZADI).

- **Horizon scanning**

Horizon scanning includes all aspects of information gathering and analysis that identify or clarify or add information on hazards. CHaIRS members carry out

horizon scanning on chemical hazards. It is anticipated this activity will expand as the Group develops.

Chair

It is proposed that FSA should Chair the group, as nearly all of the incidents have food safety implications.

Membership²

Terry Donohoe	(Food Standards Agency) (Chair)
Jo Payne	(Veterinary Laboratories Agency)
Chris Livesey	(Veterinary Laboratories Agency)
John Caseley	(Food Standards Agency) (Secretary)
Alison Gleadle	(Food Standards Agency)
Ruth Lysons	(Defra)
Stephen Wyllie	(Defra)
Trish Logie	(Defra)
David Harris	(Animal Health)
Ovnair Sepai	(Health Protection Agency)
Graham Urquhart	(Health Protection Agency)
Alison Gowers	(Environment Agency)
David Webb	(Veterinary Medicines Directorate)
Paul Johnson	(Health and Safety Laboratory)
Martin Rose	(Food and Environment Research Agency)
Chris Mawdsley	(Health and Safety Executive)
Martin Ball	(Health and Safety Executive)

² Membership at each meeting will depend on issues discussed.