

HUSH NEWSLETTER

Food Safety Amendment Regulations

A year ago, HUSH responded to Government Consultations in Scotland and England on **The Future of Butcher Licensing**. Following the Central Scotland (Wishaw) Outbreak of E.coli O157 in 1996, Professor Hugh Pennington led an investigation that resulted in a number of recommendations to improve food hygiene and safety. One of these recommendations was that all butchers and producers who are handling raw and cooked meats, whether at retail, preparation or wholesale, should be licenced by their local food authority. Butchers presently need to satisfy certain hygiene conditions over and above the current EU General Food Hygiene Directive before a licence can be issued. They cost £100 and must be renewed annually. It was agreed this would most likely be an interim measure until such time as HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) could be implemented.

New EU food hygiene regulations taking effect on 1st January 2006 will remove the butchers' licensing requirement unless the UK specifically make new national provisions to continue this arrangement beyond the end of 2005.

The charity is concerned that the new EU regulations have no requirement for mandatory food handler training, unlike the current licensing legislation.

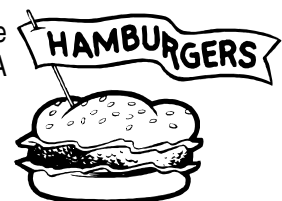
Safe Burgers?

At a recent meeting in London of the ACMSF (Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food) HUSH representatives were shocked to learn that an American Fast Food Organisation has sought to have the cooking times for burgers reduced.

The mincing process of burgers allows any organisms that are present on the surface of the raw meat to be distributed throughout the product, therefore it is accepted that burgers and other minced meat products pose a greater hazard than intact joints of meat.

In a 1995 Report on E.coli, this Government advisory group endorsed the Chief Medical Officer's advice that burgers must be thoroughly cooked. Manufacturers and retailers must ensure that their products reach an internal temperature of 70°C for 2 minutes, or equivalent. This was reinforced in 2001 when the Scottish Task Force on E.coli O157 published their findings.

A working group has been set up to look into this matter further and the charity have made their opinion clearly known to the chairperson. A decision is expected at the next meeting of the ACMSF in March.



LEADING THE FIGHT AGAINST E.COLI O157

Food Labelling Success

Following the article in the previous newsletter, we are pleased to report that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) have agreed to issue guidance on the consolidated hygiene regulations.

They confirm that labelling information concerning products made from raw milk applies up to the point of sale. Consumers must be allowed to make choices in the knowledge of available facts. Lydia Wilkie, Assistant Director of FSA Scotland and Chris Pratt, Head of the Hygiene Policy and Legislation Unit at state: *"This information should be provided via packaging, document, notice, label, ring or collar accompanying or referring to the concerned products."* It will be the responsibility of the Local Food Authorities to enforce these requirements as part of their wider ongoing enforcement duties.

Early in the new year HUSH will conduct another survey on the labelling of unpasteurised cheeses in supermarkets across the country. This will be a clear indicator of whether the new legislation is being adhered to.

We are indebted to everyone who has supported the charity in this campaign, particularly:

- Mr Sean Humber, Leigh Day & Co
- Sustain—the Alliance for Better Farming and Food
- Which Consumers Association
- The Food Commission
- Foodaware—the Consumers Food Group
- Mr John McDonnell, MP for Hayes and Harlington

National Awareness Campaign

To raise awareness among residents and staff at care homes and nursing homes for the elderly we have, to date, sent information leaflets and posters to 2,541 homes in Scotland, 1,818 in Wales and 8,627 in England. It is hoped that the remaining 3,009 English homes will be completed by the AGM in March.

Welsh E.coli Outbreak

The charity has received a number of calls and e-mails as a result of the recent outbreak in Wales. Families who were directly affected wanted more information and others wanted to know how to protect themselves and their families against possible infection. Parents of those who had suffered previously also sought support as old memories were rekindled.

The Welsh Assembly and Dame Deirdre Hutton, Chair of the Food Standards Agency, were questioned by HUSH and recommendations were put forward by the charity regarding the remit for the Outbreak Inquiry.

HUSH chairman, Paul Santoni, who represented families at the Inquiry into the Central Scotland Outbreak, has been providing assistance and expertise as required.

The Inquiry, which will be chaired by Professor Hugh Pennington, is due to start early in the new year and a report is expected shortly from the Welsh Chief Medical Officer.

Hand Inspection Cabinets

Due to generous donations from HUSH members, we have been able to purchase 16 cabinets that are now being used by Health Control Teams and in schools or youth groups across the country.



A fluorescent lotion is applied to hands and then washed off. When the hands are placed in the cabinet any remaining lotion will fluoresce under the ultraviolet lamp—dramatically illustrating any flaws in the hand washing technique.

HUSH AGM—Saturday 25th March

Once again we will be holding our AGM at **Guy's Thatched Hamlet**, in Bilsborrow, near Garstang, Preston. A start time of **1.30 pm** is anticipated but may be slightly flexible due to members' travelling arrangements.

This informal get-together allows sufferers, their families and anyone concerned about E.coli O157 to discuss topics associated with the bacterium, hear what the HUSH representatives have been up to and also plan what action is to be taken during the coming year.

Dr Kevin Pollock from the **Health Protection Agency** in Glasgow will be our guest speaker. Dr Pollock is in charge of the surveillance presently being carried out on HUS and will be pleased to answer members' queries.

If you require overnight accommodation Guy's Thatched Hamlet can be contacted by telephone on 01995 640849. Their web site is www.guysthatthedhamlet.com.

The meeting is open to all members and their families. If you are planning to attend it would be helpful if you could inform Ishbel on 01261 842314 or by e-mail on hush@ecoli-uk.com