

HUSH NEWSLETTER

SUCCESS IN SUSSEX

Jayne and Peter Klus-Roberts have been campaigning since 2001 to have refrigeration introduced to schools for the storage of children's lunch boxes and were delighted to learn that their son's school was installing fridges during the October mid term holiday.

The couple, from Seaford in East Sussex, joined HUSH following the death of their 9 year-old daughter Lucinda in 1997. Lucinda's younger brother, Meryk, also contracted E.coli O157 but fortunately did not go on to develop HUS.

Meryk's head teacher had initially intended purchasing new storage racks for the packed lunches but when he discovered that there was not much difference in the price he decided to order fridges for throughout the school.

Jayne says: **"We are overwhelmed, as the fridges arrived on Friday and Lucinda would have been 18 years old on the 15th October. What a way to mark her birthday"**.



Lucinda

TEN YEARS LATER

Ten years on and Wishaw has become synonymous with the world's worst E.coli O157 outbreak. HUSH founding member, Sharon Smith, clearly remembers the heartbreaking loss of her grandparents, Mary and Anthony. Although both in their 90's, they had enjoyed good health up till then and had started making plans to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary with family.

They had purchased meat locally from a supermarket supplied by John Barr Butchers in Wishaw—found to be the source of the outbreak. Sharon recalls that her grandmother was the first to fall ill when she developed an upset stomach and chronic diarrhoea. She lost control of her bodily functions, having diarrhoea 40-50 times a day and was rushed into Monklands Hospital in agony.

After a few weeks Anthony also became unwell—suffering diarrhoea and becoming very disorientated. However, as E.coli O157 hadn't been identified as the source of the couple's illness, the family decided to nurse him at home. This fit and healthy gentleman deteriorated rapidly until a heart attack claimed his life. Ten days later, Mary's organs could no longer cope with the illness and she suffered a stroke and died.

It was only after Mary's death was reported in the media that the family were told she had contracted E.coli O157. Sharon says, "Every day in the news we would hear about another person dying and there didn't seem to be anything we could do to stop it".

By the end of the outbreak 21 elderly people had died and almost 500 tested positive for the bacterium.

Professor Hugh Pennington chaired an expert group looking at the cause and effects of the outbreak and published a list of recommendations. However, 10 years later he is urging the Scottish Executive and other groups to increase funding for E.coli O157 research as recent figures from Health Protection Scotland (HPS) show that cases of E.coli O157 in Scotland this year are expected to reach their highest total since the Wishaw outbreak. 226 cases of E.coli O157 have been reported in the first 44 weeks of 2006, compared to 145 during the same period last year.

HUSH Chairman Paul Santoni, who gave legal representation to families involved in the Wishaw outbreak, says: "These things tend to wax and wane, but I think it did put E.coli to the front of people's minds. But it could happen again, there is always that possibility."

A Scottish Executive spokesman has indicated that E.coli is a priority, with extensive research being carried out in both Scotland and the rest of the UK, and that a more rural population is a contributing factor.

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Zoonoses Report 2005

Zoonoses are defined by the World Health Organisation as "diseases and infections which are transmitted naturally between vertebrate animals and man"

The recent report, issued by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) covers the UK and indicates that E.coli O157 infection rose by 25% in 2005, mainly in England and Wales. This was in part attributable to the large school outbreak in South Wales and a national outbreak of the strain VTEC O157 PT8 affecting 200 people.

England/Wales	946 reported cases	35% increase on 2004
Northern Ireland	39	100% "
Scotland	172	18% decrease on 2004

The main reservoir of O157 is mainly cattle, sheep and goats but the organism has been found in faeces from a wide range of animals including horses, pigs, dogs, domestic geese and wild rabbits. It is estimated that the infectious dose can be between 10 and 100 organisms.

When outbreaks of disease occur in humans, and the evidence suggests that animals on a particular farm are a possible source either via the food chain or through direct animal contact, government veterinary surgeons will (at the request of the Outbreak Control Team) assist with on-farm investigations to establish the possible source. Advice is also given to farmers on farm hygiene. During 2005, assistance was given with on-farm investigations on nine occasions, including four open farms, to try to establish the origin of outbreaks in people.

A pilot intervention study carried out by the Veterinary Laboratories Agency investigated the effectiveness of three regimes to reduce E.coli O157, Campylobacter and Eimeria spp. In young cattle. Of the three regimes, keeping the bedding dry, using enclosure-specific boot dip and overcoats, and keeping other animals away from cattle enclosures reduced the prevalence of both E.coli O157 and Eimeria spp, but had no effect on Campylobacter.

A number of measures have been emphasised in abattoirs to minimise the faecal contamination of carcasses. Amongst these, an assessment of the fleece/hide cleanliness of animals arriving for slaughter is made by the official veterinary surgeon, who then decides if they are to be rejected, cleaned before resubmission for inspection, or to be processed paying particular attention to hygienic dressing procedures.

JUST GIVE—TO HUSH

HUSH has just made it easier for you to donate to the charity via a secure internet site:

- www.justgiving.com/hush/donate/

By logging onto this site, anyone can make a single donation or set up their own fundraising web page so that family and friends can donate to a specific fundraiser. Another big advantage for all UK taxpayers is that their donations will automatically be boosted by 28% in gift aid.



The first to take advantage of this service was Ian Williams who ran a half marathon in Stroud on 22nd October and finished in a very respectable 1.50:35 hr. He was delighted to finish 138th out of a field of over 2000 runners and raised a fantastic **£1282.82!**

Ian was encouraged to run for HUSH by his work colleague, Sharon Smith—who tells readers about the family's experience of the Wishaw Outbreak on the front page.

A father of three young children himself, Ian was shocked to hear how devastating the bacterium is, particularly for the young and the elderly, and was keen to support the work of HUSH.

Katie Thomas

who featured in the last newsletter had a great day learning how to jump out of a plane for charity!

As you can see from the photograph, she had a wonderful time and raised **£259** for HUSH.



For Your Diary: **HUSH AGM—Saturday 24th March**

In Guy's Thatched Hamlet, Bilsborrow, near Garstang, Preston at 1.30 pm
(time 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 doing, and also plan what action is to be taken during the coming year. HUSH member, Marilyn Chapman, has written the attached letter, encouraging as many as possible to come along.

Dr Kevin Pollock from **Health Protection Scotland** will be there to tell us about the HUS surveillance, ENSHURE, and will also 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.guysthatchedhamlet.co.uk

The meeting is open to all members and their families. If you are planning to attend it would be helpful if you could inform HUSH Co-ordinator, Ishbel.

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