

# final report

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## **Report on 5th World Congress on Foodborne Infections and Intoxications, Berlin**

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## **Report on 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Foodborne Infections and Intoxications (Berlin, June 6-11, 2004)**

### **Background**

The fifth congress was similar to the previous four, essentially a “mega” conference covering a wide range of topics, with both plenary and specific sessions and poster sessions. The congress was attended by more than 300, of whom two were from Australia (Dr Desmarchelier and myself).

### **Topic streams**

There were seven main topic streams:

- Epidemiology of foodborne infections and intoxications
- New and re-emerging pathogens
- Microbiological risk analysis
- Modern technologies and foodborne diseases
- Catering, tourism and food safety
- Global trade and food hygiene

### **Presentations**

A booklet containing abstracts of almost all presentations has been forwarded to MLA; a number of papers will be of interest to many of those people who work on MLA expert panels and it is recommended that the contents pages be circulated to them.

For me, the most significant presentations were the plenaries and sessions on risk assessment, management and communication. Especially interesting was a paper by Bob Buchanan on transparency, separation of assessment and management and biases of stakeholders. Another was by Phil Comer of DNV on BSE risk assessment and it is recommended that contact is made with him because his group have progressed on exposure assessment and dose response.

Another important presentation was by Henrik Wegener on the Danish strategies to reduce salmonellosis by through-chain control of egg, poultry and pork production. A similar paper by Sigrid Brynestad on how Norway is approaching the problem of campylobacteriosis was also interesting.

### **MLA presentation**

Our presentation: *Risk Ranger, a food safety risk assessment tool*, was part of a session entitled “Instruments of risk management during the absence of valid risk assessment”. The paper summarized the MLA risk profile of our meat industry and focused on how we used risk assessment in connection with control of *Clostridium perfringens* during cooling of cooked, cured meats.

The paper stimulated numerous questions and requests for the presentation. The full paper will be included in the Proceeding of the Congress.

## **The future**

For me, the big picture from the Congress is how some European countries, particularly in Scandinavia, are setting strategies for reducing the burden of foodborne disease by concentrating on reducing pathogen levels during animal production and on ascribing different processing regimes to contaminated product.

## **Report on World Meat Hygiene and Inspection Congress (Cambridge, July 5-8, 2004)**

### **Background**

The Congress is a bi-annual meeting, mainly of veterinarians from countries involved in the global meat trade; the two previous meetings were in Australia (1999) and Mexico (2001). There were three attendees from Australia (Tom Maguire, John Langbridge and myself). All sessions were plenary and there were two workshops, on Risk Assessment and on Verification.

### **Presentations**

There were no topic streams, as such, and, as a generalization, papers were given by “official” speakers representing countries, Codex, European Food Safety Authority or the European Union. To some extent this dictated that the presentations be “fact-free” so that nothing of importance was divulged. Thus, USA representatives from FSIS and USDA concentrated on the “Mega-Reg” and their perception of its effect on the burden of foodborne disease in USA. Similarly, Canada wrestled with how auditing could be introduced to abattoir operations.

In many ways a yawning gap emerged between countries which had implemented “modern” food safety management systems, such as Australia and New Zealand to those which were in the early stages of questioning current practices (rest of the world).

There were two workshops. John Langbridge attended the verification workshop and appeared disappointed with the approach of the UK to microbiological monitoring. I attended an excellent workshop organized by DNV in which four groups of about 10 people each were required to review pork production, slaughter and processing in UK with a view to identifying where resources were currently invested, the effectiveness of those resources and how investment could be improved. DNV staff facilitated the workshop and summarized the findings for the Congress. In our group we found that resources were currently concentrated at the abattoir; that they would be better spent on managing pork production systems and that more investment be made on processing to accommodate pathogen levels in herds.

### **MLA presentation**

Our presentation was in a bracket of three:

- Risk Management and HACCP Implementation in New Zealand - Lessons learned (Judi Lee, New Zealand Food Safety Authority)



- HACCP Implementation in Australia - Lessons learned (John Langbridge, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service)
- Validation of hygiene in red meat processing (John Sumner, Tom Maguire and Ian Jensen)

The session was one of the few which contained fact and real-life experience, particularly from John Langbridge, who received a large number of questions. Our paper, which summarized the HACCP validation workshop held in Sydney earlier this year, involved concepts beyond the current scope of veterinarians from most countries. However, the reviewer of the session singled out the papers from Australia as showing the future for meat safety management. As well, I expect there to be requests for the compact disc which summarized the workshop.

### **The future**

The Congress was an excellent reality check on meat hygiene as our major customers perceive it.