

CHAPTER 6.3.

CONTROL OF BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS OF ANIMAL HEALTH AND PUBLIC HEALTH IMPORTANCE THROUGH ANTE- AND POST-MORTEM MEAT INSPECTION

Article 6.3.1.

Introduction

Foodborne disease and zoonoses are important public health problems and causes of decreased economic productivity in developed and developing countries. Similarly, transmission of *hazards* of animal health importance via the *meat* production chain and associated by-products can result in significant economic loss in livestock. Inspection of *animals* at *slaughter* can provide a valuable contribution to *surveillance* for certain diseases of animal and public health importance. Control and/or reduction of biological *hazards* of animal and public health importance by ante- and post-mortem *meat* inspection are a core responsibility of *Veterinary Services*.

Article 6.3.2.

Purpose

These recommendations provide a basis for future development of OIE standards for animal production food safety.

Article 6.3.3.

Hygienic practice throughout the meat production chain

The Codex Alimentarius Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat (CHPM) constitutes the primary international standard for *meat* hygiene and incorporates a *risk*-based approach to application of hygiene practices and sanitation throughout the *meat* production chain. Ante-mortem inspection is described as a primary component of *meat* hygiene before *slaughter*, and post-mortem inspection is described as a primary component of process control in post-slaughter *meat* hygiene. The CHPM specifically recognises the dual objectives that *slaughterhouse/abattoir* inspection activities deliver in terms of animal and public health.

The CHPM does not provide inspection measures for specific *hazards*, which remain the responsibility of national competent authorities. The animal and public health *risks* associated with livestock populations vary across regions and animal husbandry systems, and ante- and post-mortem inspection needs to be tailored to the individual country situation and its animal and public health objectives.

The CHPM provides a platform for development of *meat* hygiene systems that are based on *risk assessment*. There are few *risk assessment* models and little relevant scientific information available on public health *hazards* derived specifically from *animals* and their products, making difficult the development of *risk*-based standards for foodborne diseases and zoonoses. While this scientific information is being accumulated, ante- and post-mortem inspection systems will remain dependent on traditional approaches.

Article 6.3.4.

Veterinary Services and meat inspection programmes

Veterinary Services are primarily responsible for the development of ante- and post-mortem *meat* inspection programmes. Wherever practicable, inspection procedures should be *risk*-based and management systems should reflect international norms and cover the significant *hazards* to both human and animal health in the livestock being

slaughtered, as determined by the *Veterinary Services*. In respect of ante- and post-mortem inspection as a component of *meat* hygiene, responsibilities of *Veterinary Services* include:

- 1) *risk assessment* and *risk management*;
- 2) establishment of policies and standards;
- 3) design and management of inspection programmes;
- 4) assurance and certification of appropriate delivery of inspection and compliance activities;
- 5) dissemination of information throughout the *meat* production chain.

Article 6.3.5.

Risk assessment and risk management

Veterinary Services should utilise *risk assessment* to the greatest extent practicable in the development of *sanitary measures*. *Veterinary Services* should give priority to addressing microbiological contamination, while not neglecting gross abnormalities detected at ante- and post-mortem inspection, as this has been found to be the most important source of *hazards*.

Microbiological, serological or other testing at single-animal and *herd* or *flock* level as part of ante- and post-mortem inspection should be used to support *surveillance*, as well as *risk assessment* of prioritised foodborne *hazards*. The information gathered should be linked to human disease data to allow an assessment of the effectiveness of various management options, as well as a general evaluation of food sources of foodborne disease.

Application of a generic framework should provide a systematic and consistent process for managing all *biosecurity risks*, while accommodating the different *risk assessment* methodologies used in animal and public health.

Article 6.3.6.

Establishment of policies and standards

The national competent authority(ies) should provide an appropriate institutional environment to allow *Veterinary Services* to develop the necessary policies and standards.

As well as meeting public health objectives, policies and standards relating to ante- and post-mortem inspection should aim to detect and remove *hazards* of animal health significance from the *meat* production chain. This may be achieved by the removal of live *animals* at ante-mortem inspection or by the removal of specific tissues at post-mortem inspection.

Veterinary Services should integrate their activities to the maximum extent practicable so as to prevent duplication of effort and unnecessary costs, e.g. within the process of international certification.

Article 6.3.7.

Design and management of inspection programmes

In meeting animal and public health objectives prescribed in national legislations or required by *importing countries*, *Veterinary Services* contribute through the direct performance of some veterinary tasks or through the auditing of animal and public health activities conducted by other agencies or the private sector. To this end, *Veterinary Services* provide assurances domestically and to trading partners that safety and suitability standards have been met.

Veterinary Services should allow flexibility in *meat* inspection service delivery through an officially recognised competent body operating under its supervision and control. In recognition of the contribution of industry to food safety, quality assurance systems may be extended in the case of ante- and post-mortem inspection to systems that integrate industry and *Veterinary Services* activities. Nevertheless, *Veterinary Services* should take into account the factors identified in Chapter 3.2. on the fundamental principles of quality of Veterinary Services. For example, if personnel from the private sector are used to carry out ante- and post-mortem inspection activities under the overall supervision and responsibility of the *Veterinary Services*, the *Veterinary Services* should specify the competency requirements for all such persons and verify their performance.

Article 6.3.8.

Assurance and certification

Assurance and certification of appropriate delivery of inspection and compliance activities is a vital function of *Veterinary Services*. International health certificates providing official assurances for trading of *meat* must engender full confidence to the country of importation.

Article 6.3.9.

Dissemination of information

Organisation and dissemination of information throughout the *meat* production chain involves multidisciplinary inputs. To ensure the effective implementation of ante- and post-mortem inspection procedures, *Veterinary Services* should have in place systems for the monitoring of these procedures and the exchange of information gained. Further, there should be an ongoing programme for monitoring of *hazards* at appropriate points throughout the *meat* production chain so as to help evaluate the efficacy of controls. *Animal identification* and *animal traceability* systems should be integrated in order to be able to trace slaughtered *animals* back to their place of origin, and products derived from them forward through the *meat* production chain.

NB: FIRST ADOPTED IN 2022.

