

Northern Ireland Strategy for the Surveillance, Prevention and Control of *E. coli* O157

25 September 2006

Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached a copy of the Northern Ireland Strategy for the Surveillance, Prevention and Control of *E. coli* O157, which has been produced by the Northern Ireland *E. coli* O157 Taskforce.

The Taskforce was established in June 2003 as a subgroup of the Regional Zoonoses Group (RZG) under the direction of Dr. Henrietta Campbell when CMO. The Taskforce included representatives from the Departments of Health and Agriculture, the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, the Food Standards Agency, the Food Safety Promotion Board as well as other Public Health professionals and was chaired by Dr. George McIlroy, then Chief Scientific Officer at the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. It was set up following the reports of the Scottish Taskforce and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland in order to develop a Northern Ireland strategy for the surveillance, prevention and control of *E. coli* O157 by reviewing current practice and procedures.

The document was issued to stakeholders and named agencies for comment in July 2005 and nine responses were received. At a meeting of the RZG on 12 October 2005 these responses were assessed and the report duly amended where thought appropriate and if within the group's remit. This final version of the report has been approved by the Taskforce subgroup and in July 2006 endorsed by the then acting CMO and chair of RZG, Dr Elizabeth Mitchell.

The report makes 24 recommendations where it felt that arrangements in relation to epidemiology and surveillance in humans, animals and food, clinical diagnosis and management in humans and the steps taken to prevent and control human infection could be strengthened or improved upon. It allocates one or more action agencies to be responsible for taking each recommendation forward. Most of those bodies were represented on the Taskforce group and have accepted responsibility for the relevant actions. A number of the recommendations are already being progressed.

Ten public sector bodies or groups are specified as being responsible for taking forward one or more of the recommended actions: CDSC, DARD, DCAL, DE, DHSSPS, FSA, FSPB, District Council EHOs, HSENI, and the RZG.

The report is now being distributed by email to interested parties and placed on the DHSSPS website. A press statement to announce its publication will also be issued. When new epidemiological information and any other significant changes are known, the report will be updated to reflect such developments. Responsibility for updating the website lies with DHSSPS once changes are agreed by RZG or the Taskforce subgroup.

The RZG decided at its last meeting that the Taskforce should meet after a year to review progress. In the meantime the Group will meet shortly to make arrangements for effecting and monitoring the strategy's implementation.

Jeffrey Dudgeon
DHSSPS Health Protection Team

Room C4.14
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

jeff.dudgeon@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Tel 028 90520083