

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

URGENT COMMUNICATION

HSS(MD)4/2013

FOR ACTION

David Bingham, Chief Executive, BSO
Trust Chief Executives (*for distribution to Finance Directors
(procurement lead) and Executive Directors
responsible for catering*)
Glenn Houston, RQIA (*for distribution to registered agencies
and establishments (independent sector)*)

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD)4/2013
Date: 12 February 2013

Dear Colleague

Supplies of Beef Products to NHS Providers

The detection of horsemeat in beef products has been reported in the media and has caused some concern to consumers. There remains no evidence of a food safety threat, and the Food Standards Agency's priority remains to protect the public.

FSA issued advice to public bodies last night via their website <http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2013/feb/advice> and I am writing to you to pass on the message reminding HSC organisations of their responsibility for their own food contracts and expenditure. I am grateful to BSO for assembling the information in relation to the specifications for the regional food contracts which PaLS puts in place for HSC and to RQIA for agreeing to distribute a copy of this letter to registered agencies and establishments in the independent sector. I would be grateful to Trust Chief Executives if they could ensure appropriate action is taken in their organisations.

Public institutions (including HSC organisations) are within the scope of the UK-wide authenticity sampling programme being organised by the Food Standards Agency. Therefore, suppliers (such as caterers) of meat products to hospitals are included within that surveillance programme.

In addition, suppliers – including caterers – to public institutions are part of the extensive testing regime the Food Standards Agency has established with the food industry, including food service businesses.

Whilst BSO is the lead organisation for procurement for the HSC, HSC organisations are reminded that we expect public bodies to have rigorous procurement procedures in place with reputable suppliers to ensure the food they are providing is safe and of the quality and standard it is labelled as, including no contamination or unlabelled presence of horse or pig meat in beef products. These should include suitable assurances on sampling and checking regimes of suppliers with regards to authenticity.

FSA advice remains that any recalled products should not be used. The evidence to date does not suggest there is a food safety risk. If further information indicates any health risk then the FSA will provide consumers with advice. FSA will be continuing to update the website as required, colleagues are recommended to check the website for the latest information on a regular basis.

If any HSC organisation has any concerns, they should contact BSO/local catering suppliers immediately. If any HSC organisation is made aware by their catering supplier that beef product **does contain** horsemeat, I would ask the HSC organisation to report this to BSO via Peter Wilson's office on heather.johnston@hscni.net or peter.wilson@hscni.net and any correspondence should be copied to martin.coleman@dhsspsni.gov.uk.

Thank you for your on-going support in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Dr Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer

Copied for information
Chief Executive, PHA
Chief Executive, HSCB
Chief Executive PCC
ALBs