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# PRESS RELEASE

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

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**Distributed by the Food Standards Agency on behalf of the ACMSF**

### **SECOND REPORT ON SALMONELLA IN EGGS**

The independent, expert Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)'s Second Report on *Salmonella* in Eggs is published today. The Report contains more than 30 recommendations which the Committee hopes will help existing efforts to improve the microbiological quality of UK eggs.

Launching the Report today, the Committee's Chairman, Professor Douglas Georgala, said :-

*"We believe we are seeing a real success story here. There has been a sustained drop in human Salmonella cases since 1997. We believe that this reflects a corresponding fall in the levels of Salmonella in eggs. There are reasons for believing that these improvements flow from the widespread vaccination of egg laying flocks against Salmonella enteritidis, combined with improved flock hygiene measures.*

*We now need independent scientific confirmation that the prevalence of Salmonella in eggs has indeed reduced. We have therefore recommended that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) should carry out a survey of retail eggs for this purpose.*

*Eggs are a raw animal product and we have asked the FSA to maintain rigorous monitoring against the possible future appearance of other salmonellas".*

The ACMSF, which first reported on *Salmonella* in Eggs in 1993, returned to the topic in 1998 when results of a 1995/96 Government-funded survey of UK shell eggs indicated that there had been no significant improvement in the prevalence of *Salmonella* contamination since 1991. The Committee therefore set up a

Working Group to establish the factors which determine the presence of *Salmonella* in or on eggs and to recommend how consumer exposure could be reduced.

Since the peak in 1997, laboratory-confirmed cases of human salmonellosis have fallen from nearly 36,400 to just under 17,000, a 53% reduction.

In its Report, the ACMSF looks at *Salmonella* infections in humans and the evidence that eggs have a role in human salmonellosis. It also looks at existing measures to reduce *Salmonella* contamination of eggs, the contribution of vaccination and competitive exclusion, and the storage, handling and use of eggs. ***A summary of conclusions and recommendations is contained in Chapter 11 of the Report (pages 65-73).***

The Report recommends immediate FSA-funded surveillance to assess whether the overall level of contamination in UK eggs has reduced since the 1995/96 survey. The Committee received encouraging evidence from industry testing of eggs indicating an improving situation and recommended that the proposed FSA survey should compare eggs from vaccinated flocks with eggs from non-vaccinated flocks.

The Report contains a number of other detailed recommendations covering a range of issues from enhanced, and better harmonised surveillance and data collection, to potentially fruitful areas for future research.

### **Notes for Editors**

1. Copies of the Report are available from the Stationery Office (ISBN 0-11-322466-4), priced £29.50.

2. This press release is issued on behalf of the ACMSF by the Food Standards Agency. The role of the ACMSF is to provide the Agency with independent expert advice on the microbiological safety of food.

3. The ACMSF's Chairman is Professor Douglas L Georgala, an independent scientific consultant and retired Director of the Institute of Food Research.

4. The terms of reference of the ACMSF are to :

*assess the risk to humans of microorganisms which are used or occur in or on food and to advise the Food Standards Agency on any matters relating to the microbiological safety of food.*

5. The ACMSF Working Group on *Salmonella* in Eggs was Chaired by Dr Mike Painter, a Consultant in Communicable Disease Control with Manchester Health Authority. The Working Group's terms of reference were to :

*establish the factors which determine the presence of Salmonella contamination in or on eggs and to recommend measures to reduce such contamination and consumers' exposure to it.*

**[ENDS]**