

Real veterinarians don't wear helmets?

Role, task and responsibilities of veterinarians in public health

Experts in food hygiene

Wholesome safe food, whether meat, milk or eggs, comes from healthy animals and the veterinary profession are the Obvious experts in animal health. In addition, the training of veterinarians covers the broad spectrum of activities necessary in order to ensure consumer safety.



The knowledge of animal diseases, microbiology, epidemiology, veterinary medicinal products and hygiene as well as the ability to see those factors in relationship to human health makes the veterinary profession uniquely qualified to assess the safety of food of animal origin and to protect consumers.

Safer food

The food poisoning statistics demonstrate the risks of acquiring diseases as a result of consuming unsafe meat, milk, cheese, eggs or fish and rightly cause concern to many consumers.

They also highlight the need for educated professionals with the ability to assess the health risks and establish processes that will reduce or eliminate these public health threats which are confirmed to be high.

| Pathogen | No reported human cases in 2006 | Main sources |
|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Campylobacter | 200,507 | poultry, poultry products (meat) |
| Salmonella | 151,995 | poultry, pig meat, eggs |
| Yersinia | 8,792 | pig meat, milk, water |
| E. coli (VTEC) | 2,905 | food, water |

Source: EFSA 2009 "The Community summary report on trends and sources of zoonoses and zoonotic agents in the European Union in 2007" (MS 27)



“The veterinarian is competent to give advice at all phases of the food chain”.



Veterinary tasks and responsibilities in the food chain

Food of animal origin should come from healthy animals whose on farm husbandry has ensured that they were kept under clean and animal welfare friendly conditions and that the food product produced is free from residues of veterinary medicinal products, pesticides or herbicides.

The veterinarian is competent to give advice at all phases of the food chain. This commences on the farm with controls of the feed, the hygiene-standards (e.g. during milking) and the traceability of animals in order to prevent sick animals from entering the food chain. The veterinarian on the farm

or the veterinarian at the place of slaughter carry out a physical examination and if necessary further tests, to confirm that an animal is fit for slaughter.

The Veterinarian at the slaughterhouse

Veterinarians are widely involved in the planning and approval of food processing facilities. Some are also involved in developing new concepts for slaughterhouses. The construction of these establishments is often crucial for being able to produce food with high hygienic standards.

Every establishment that slaughters animals for food has an Official Veterinarian present throughout the slaughter process who ensures that the required

standards of animal welfare, animal health and hygiene are maintained. Every animal receives an inspection after slaughter and evisceration by either a veterinarian or an inspection under his/her supervision. Meat showing any sign of disease, parasites or any other hazards that could be harmful for the consumer is excluded from the food chain. In addition, if there is any evidence for abnormalities, further testing for bacteria, for example campylobacter,

salmonella, parasites such as trichinella and also chemical hazards (e.g. residues, contaminants) is carried out.

Residue testing is done on a regular basis to ensure that the consumer is not ingesting meat of animals that were recently treated with antibiotics which could enhance the risk of the development of resistance.

But the veterinarian's work and responsibility doesn't end at the door of the slaughterhouse.

Veterinary tasks and responsibilities in the food chain



Ham during maturation

Control of the chilling of food during storing, processing and retail as well

as the hygiene of places where food is handled may also be part of veterinary work in food hygiene. This does not only include meat and meat products but also milk, eggs and fish.

In conclusion, veterinarians through the breadth of their education cover every important aspect of food hygiene. The term "**from farm to fork**" summarizes

very well how important it is to not only have healthy animals on the farms, but also to ensure high standards during the following steps of gaining food from those animals. Only this can guarantee safe food of high quality to the consumer.



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The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is the European umbrella organization for veterinarians in wider Europe. FVE currently represents 44 national veterinary organizations in 38 European countries.