FINAL REPORT OF AN AUDIT

CARRIED OUT IN

THE UNITED KINGDOM

FROM 11 TO 20 JUNE 2013

IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE SALMONELLA NATIONAL CONTROL PROGRAMMES IN PARTICULAR POULTRY POPULATIONS (BREEDERS, LAYING HENS, BROILERS AND TURKEYS)

In response to information provided by the Competent Authority, any factual error noted in the draft report has been corrected; any clarification appears in the form of a footnote.
Executive Summary

This report describes the outcome of an audit carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office in the United Kingdom, from 11 to 20 June 2013.

The objective of the current audit was to evaluate the actions taken by the United Kingdom competent authorities in order to control Salmonella in poultry. The audit paid attention in particular to the implementation of the United Kingdom Salmonella National Control Programmes.

The report concludes that the United Kingdom Salmonella National Control Programmes are implemented in all regions and cover all poultry populations. In general, official and food business operators’ own-check sampling are carried out in line with European Union legislation with some deficiencies related to sampling protocols. However, in the areas where official controls are delegated to independent control bodies, the system cannot provide guarantees to the competent authorities that the requirements related to the control programmes are properly implemented regarding verification of FBOs’ own-checks. This is mainly due to the unstructured nature of communication of results of operator auditing by control bodies to the competent authorities as well as to the absence of an auditing system on these control bodies.

The report addresses to the United Kingdom competent authorities a number of recommendations aimed at rectifying identified shortcomings and enhancing the control system in place.
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<td>Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency</td>
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<td>DARD</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>DEFRA</td>
<td>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</td>
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<td>EU</td>
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<td>European Union Reference Laboratory</td>
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<td>Farm Assurance Scheme</td>
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<td>Food Business Operator</td>
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<td>Food Chain Information</td>
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<td>FVO</td>
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<td>Independent Control Body</td>
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<td>National Reference Laboratory</td>
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<td>Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed</td>
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<td>SE</td>
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<td>SNCP</td>
<td><em>Salmonella</em> National Control Programme</td>
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<td>Specialist Service Centre</td>
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<td>ST</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UKAS</td>
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1 INTRODUCTION

The audit took place in the United Kingdom (UK) from 11 to 20 June 2013 and was undertaken as part of the Food and Veterinary Office's (FVO) planned audit programme.

The audit team comprised two auditors from the FVO and one national expert. Representatives from the Competent Authority (CA) accompanied the audit team during the whole audit.

An opening meeting was held on 11 June 2013 with the Central CA (CCA). At this meeting the audit team confirmed the objectives of, and itinerary for the audit (England and Scotland were visited), and requested additional information required for its satisfactory completion.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the audit was to investigate the actions taken by the CA in order to control Salmonella in poultry, in particular the implementation of the Salmonella National Control Programmes (SNCP) for breeding flocks and laying hens of Gallus gallus, broiler flocks and turkeys.

In order to achieve this objective the audit team evaluated the organisation of the CA and its capacity for implementing the relevant European Union (EU) requirements.

The table below lists the sites visited and the meetings held in order to achieve the audit objective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent authority</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Opening and closing meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional CA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Control Body (ICB)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The ICBs are responsible for official sampling and verification of Food Business Operators' (FBOs) own-check sampling in the laying hen and turkey sectors (delegated specific tasks related to official controls).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laboratories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official laboratory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>This laboratory also tests FBOs' own-check samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratories testing FBOs’ own-check samples</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary production</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeding farms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laying hen farms</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broiler farms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey farms</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>One breeding and one fattening holding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3 LEGAL BASIS

The audit was carried out in agreement with the UK Authorities and under the general provisions of EU legislation¹ and, in particular:

¹ Legal acts quoted in this report refer, where applicable, to the last amended version. Full references to the acts quoted in this report are given in the Annex to this report.
• Article 45 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules;


4 BACKGROUND

This was the first audit in the UK covering SNCPs for poultry.

In the UK, according to the CA, in 2012 there were 493 breeding hen holdings, 1,631 holdings of laying hens, 1,472 broiler holdings, 85 breeding turkey holdings (adult) and 812 turkey fattener holdings subject to SNCPs.

There have been no Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notifications linked to table eggs or poultry meat from the UK during the past three years.

The last known (2011) infection prevalence rates in the UK are as follows (source European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)):

• breeding hen flocks: <0.1% (EU average is 0.6%)
• laying hen flocks: 0.2% (EU average is 1.5%)
• broilers: <0.1% (EU average is 0.3%)
• turkeys (breeding): 0% (EU average is 0.2%)
• turkeys (fattening): 0.2% (EU average is 0.5%)

For all poultry populations concerned, Salmonella prevalences are below the Union targets.

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 COMPETENT AUTHORITY

Legal requirements

Article 3(1) of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 requires Member States to designate a competent authority or competent authorities for the purpose of this Regulation and notify the Commission thereof.

Article 4(6) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires the CA to carry out internal audits or may have external audits carried out.

Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 lays down the rules on specific tasks related to official controls delegated to one or more control bodies.

Audit findings

In the UK, the Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), as the CCA has overall responsibility for the SNCPs. In Northern Ireland the operation of the control programmes is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The SNCPs in Wales and Scotland operate with the collaboration of the Welsh and the Scottish Government, respectively.
Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) as an executive agency of Defra is responsible for the implementation of SNCPS in Great Britain (GB).

Key AHVLA functions specifically related to the implementation of the SNCPs include delivery of official control sampling, disease control and enforcement measures, collection and collation of data on implementation of the programmes, provision of advice and training to official staff and official laboratory services. The Scottish Egg and Poultry Unit enforces egg marketing standards in Scotland.

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing animal health, animal welfare and food hygiene legislation. The audit team was informed by the CCA that both AHVLA and the local authorities have the power to enforce legal requirements related to SNCPs. They provided evidence of cases when penalty notices were issued by AHVLA due to the placing of eggs on the market without testing the flock for *Salmonella* or when the required flock testing protocol was not fully adhered to. The audit team also saw evidence that when a flock was positive for targeted *Salmonella* serovars, AHVLA served restriction notices on the FBOs concerned (including restriction on movement of birds, hatching eggs, feedstuffs and restriction on placing eggs on the market, etc.).

In Northern Ireland, DARD Veterinary Service carries out all the functions specifically related to the implementation of the SNCPs including enforcement.

Certain official control tasks related to SNCPs in GB are delegated to ICBs in the laying hen and turkey sector as provided for by Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. The tasks delegated are the official sampling and control of the performance of the FBO sampling at farm level for those FBOs who chose to be members of Farm Assurance Schemes (FAS). In the case of laying hen and turkey farms outside a FAS for which an ICB has been nominated to carry out the delegated official tasks, these tasks are carried out directly by the CA. There are no delegated official tasks to similar control bodies in Northern Ireland.

The Food Standards Agency, among other tasks, is responsible for official controls in poultry slaughterhouses including auditing the FBO’s receipt, check and action on results of *Salmonella* tests within the SNCP as declared on Food Chain Information (FCI).

A more detailed description of the CAs can be found in the country profile for the UK on the following website: [http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/controlsystems_en.cfm?co_id=GB](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/controlsystems_en.cfm?co_id=GB).

**Legislation**

Legal basis for official services to implement the SNCPs are provided for in GB by the Animal Health Act 1981 and the Zoonoses Order 1989, and in Northern Ireland by the Disease of Animals Order 1981 and the Zoonoses Order 1991.

Legal basis for FBOs to implement the programmes are provided for in "Control of *Salmonella* in Poultry/Broilers/Turkeys Orders".

**Training**

The audit team was informed by the CCA that in the beginning of the implementation of the programmes specific training courses were organised for AHVLA and DARD staff (most recently “*Salmonella* in poultry training day” in 2012 and 2013).

In the AHVLA operations manual a chapter on ‘Reportable Diseases and other Zoonoses’ provides all the necessary information to CA staff involved in the implementation of the SNCPs, including copies of the EU and national legislation, details of the legislative requirements, sampling protocols, official actions required in the event of detection of *Salmonella* in a poultry flock, restriction notices

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2 UK Farm Assurance Schemes are intended to provide consumers and businesses with guarantees that food has been produced to particular standards.
etc. In Northern Ireland a similar staff instruction manual is used by the DARD veterinary services.

The audit team saw evidence of ongoing training provided to ICB auditors involved in the implementation of the SNCP for the laying hen sector. These training sessions are jointly organised by the FBOs’ Control Programme (in the case of laying hens), the respective ICB and AHVLA. The audit team was informed by the CA that a similar training session was organised for the ICB involved in the turkey sector in January 2010.

The audit team was informed that information on the implementation of the SNCPs is provided to FBOs and other industry stakeholders via several routes. These include the following: Government-Stakeholder meetings, workshops, DVDs on how to take SNCP samples, producer letters sent directly to all producers, sampling calendars and websites. On Defra AHVLA websites information is publicly available on e.g. voluntary guides on the control of *Salmonella* in poultry production; UK guides for SNCPs; advisory leaflets on biosecurity and good farm management, etc.

**Audit**

The audit team was informed by the CA that to date, there is no audit system in place in the area of competence of AHVLA meeting the requirements of Article 4(6) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. AHVLA is aiming by September 2013 to have designed and agreed a risk based internal audit system. Phased implementation will take place and the expectation is that this will be completed by April 2014.

**Official supervision of the Independent Control Bodies**

The audit team was informed by the CA that there is a procedure in place to verify the performance of the approved ICBs’ implementation of the delegated official tasks. The audit team reviewed the CA supervision of the ICBs in implementing their duties:

- The ICBs are required to provide monthly to the AHVLA an updated list of producers under their control.

Evidence was provided to the audit team.

- The ICBs provide detailed feedback where their inspections identify non-compliances related to SNCPs.

The CA informed the audit team that, although there was a reporting system in place for official sampling, until the end of 2012 there were only informal processes in place between the ICBs and the CA for the reporting of the results (i.e. non-compliances) of ICB verification of FBOs’ own-checks.

The CA presented to the audit team some examples of non-compliances reported by the ICBs to AHVLA and based on this correspondence AHVLA imposed sanctions. However, the audit team noted that these cases were related to the laying hen sector and from 2013 onwards only. The audit team was provided by the CA with the procedures which they have implemented in the laying hen sector and intend to implement in the turkey sector in order to formalise the reporting system between the ICBs and the CA.

- AHVLA monitors on a monthly basis that flocks which are subject to SNCP are sampled by ICBs on all holdings.

The audit team saw documentary evidence of the monthly reports on FBOs’ own-check test results forwarded to the CA by the approved laboratories.

- ICB auditors’ performance is verified by the checks on sample quality and compliance with the required submission times carried out at the official testing laboratory.

The audit team was provided during an official laboratory visit with a copy and an explanation of
the procedures to reject non-compliant official samples.

The audit team was informed and also noted that to date the CA has not organised audits or inspections of these ICBs.

Conclusions

The CA responsible for official controls within the scope of this audit is clearly designated in compliance with EU requirements.

Staff in charge of official controls of SNCPs received adequate training.

While a comprehensive analysis of the ICBs’ compliance with the relevant EU requirements was not carried out by the audit team, the CA’s procedures in place to verify the performance of the approved ICBs’ implementation of the delegated official tasks are not fully in compliance with Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 (in particular audits or inspection of the ICBs are not carried out).

5.2 Controls at farm level

Legal requirements

Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires Member States to carry out regularly, on a risk basis and with appropriate frequency controls on feed or food businesses.

Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 sets out the general hygiene provisions for FBOs involved in primary production.

Chapter I of Annex II to Council Directive 2009/158/EC requires at least one inspection per year per holding by an official veterinarian in order to be approved by the CA for the purposes of intra-EU trade in poultry or hatching eggs.

Audit findings

All farms visited by the audit team were adequately registered in the GB Poultry Register. The audit team was informed by the CA that such registration is required for holdings with poultry flocks of more than 50 birds. Registration is voluntary if less than 50 birds are kept on the premises. Registration forms and guidance on registration are publicly available on Defra’s website.

The audit team was informed by the CA and saw evidence that a number of voluntary guides on biosecurity measures in different poultry populations have been produced in collaboration with industry representatives. These are also available on Defra’s website.

Appropriate biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction of Salmonella were in place in all farms visited. FBOs’ flock records were kept and available to the audit team.

Although the audit team was informed by the CA that during any official control visits on holdings (e.g. sampling for residues and for Salmonella, checks on animal welfare and on animal by-products) carried out by AHVLA, basic biosecurity standards are checked, there was no documentary evidence available to confirm this. The CA informed the audit team that a revised version of SNCP record check form (form SL47) will include the assessment of compliance with biosecurity standards.

The audit team was informed by the CA that breeding and fattening turkey farms and laying hen farms which chose to operate under specific FAS have to comply with specific documented standards for farm management including biosecurity requirements as specified by the respective FAS. Scheme members are audited annually or every 18 months (depending on the Scheme) against these standards by an ISO accredited certification body designated by the FAS and membership is
withdrawn in cases of serious non-compliances. The FAS nominated certification auditors have been appointed to function as industry ICBs and carry out delegated official tasks (see also Chapter 5.1). These tasks are carried out at the same time that the farm is visited for the FAS general audit. As the ICBs produce a single audit report, they do not communicate them to the CA, considering that they contain confidential information regarding the results of the overall audit of all the FAS requirements as well as information on the audit of FBOs' own-checks as a delegated official task.

Checks on the farms including biosecurity conditions are not part of the delegated official tasks.

**Feed control**

The audit team noted that after each feed consignment delivery to a holding, the FBO takes a feed sample which he/she can send for laboratory analysis in case of any doubts or suspicion. In the majority of farms visited only heat treated feed was used.

The audit team also noted in the turkey breeding and fattening farms visited that medicated feed (chlortetraycycine) was used on a regular basis to minimise effect of stress on animals caused by transport. These treatments were registered in the veterinary logbook. In the files reviewed by the audit team in the turkey breeding farm visited, FBO own-check samples were taken while the birds were under the effect of antimicrobials (medicated feed). The audit team was informed by the FBO in both farms that the possible interference of antibiotic treatments with *Salmonella* testing is not taken into account and the FBO erroneously considered that this is a legal requirement during official sampling only.

According to CA data, between April 2011 and January 2013, in total 141 official feed sampling for the presence of *Salmonella* was undertaken by the Food Standards Agency. All samples tested negative.

**Cleaning and disinfection after depopulation of a positive flock**

The audit team noted that after depopulation of a flock an effective cleaning and disinfection is carried out by the FBO and usually verified on a voluntary basis by environmental samples (i.e. swab samples) in accordance with available guidelines. Evidence of this sampling was provided to the audit team. However, in the breeding chicken/turkey, broiler and fattening turkey sector environmental samples are mandatory in cases of *Salmonella* positive flocks.

**Epidemiological surveys in the framework of the SNCPs**

For premises where *Salmonella* (one of the targeted serovars) has been detected, an inspection and advisory visit (“ZO4 visit”) is carried out by a veterinary *Salmonella* expert. An epidemiological investigation including assessment of biosecurity is carried out using a standard protocol and recorded on a ZO4 form. Advice on disease control, including biosecurity measures, specifically targeted to the situation on the premises, is provided.

In all positive cases reviewed by the audit team epidemiological investigations were carried out. Although it was not always possible for the CA to identify the source of *Salmonella* contamination, advice was given to the FBOs in order to minimise the risk of *Salmonella* contamination (e.g. improve pest control, consider vaccination, improve effectiveness of cleaning and disinfection, etc.).

**Conclusions**

Farms are appropriately registered.

The CA is not in a position to completely verify FBOs' compliance with the general hygiene provisions for primary production set out in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 (absence of documented official controls on biosecurity conditions, or checks on farms under FAS are not part of delegated official tasks).
Adequate tools to prevent *Salmonella* contamination which meet the requirements of EU legislation are in place.

### 5.3 General issues on SNCPs

The audit team noted in the farms visited that FBOs’ own-check samples are taken by farmers or by staff of the businesses they supply. The FBOs informed the audit team that they received training on sampling from private veterinarian consultants, producers’ organisations and they obtained information also from the websites of the CA.

One of the UK FAS has been approved by the CA as a FBOs’ Control Programme (as defined under Article 7 of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003) and forms part of the UK SNCP for laying hens. The requirements of the SNCP are incorporated into the assurance scheme's requirements.

In GB in broiler flocks and in breeding flocks of *Gallus gallus* official samples are taken by AHVLA staff. Whilst in turkey flocks (fattening and breeding) and in laying hen flocks routine official sampling is carried out by the respective ICB for scheme members with a designated ICB or by AHVLA staff for holdings outside schemes. All official sampling undertaken after a suspect or positive is identified is carried out by AHFLA. In Northern Ireland all official samples are taken by DARD.

Official and own-check samples are accompanied to the laboratory with a submission form which indicates: e.g. date of sampling, flock identification, type of sample, number of sample units, age of birds in the flock. The official sampling form (which is standardised within GB) contains additional information e.g. vaccination, use of antibiotics within two weeks prior to sampling, purpose of sampling, etc. The audit team noted that the submission forms do not specifically indicate the weight of faecal samples or in some cases the number of sample units taken. The CA informed the audit team that this information is verified at the laboratory and non-compliant samples would not be tested (see also Chapter 5.8.).

Following isolation of *Salmonella* spp.\(^3\) (from an FBO or official sample), the isolate is forwarded to the *Salmonella* National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for confirmation and serotyping. Group B and Group D isolates will trigger an electronic email alert sent to AHVLA’s *Salmonella* Specialist Service Centre (SSC). SSC will inform the relevant regional AHVLA office. However, no action is required at this stage.

If serotyping identifies non-vaccine strains of *Salmonella* Enteritidis or *Salmonella* Typhimurium (SE/ST) (including monophasic strains of ST), NRL sends another electronic email alert to SSC and to AHVLA headquarters. Based on the alert the SSC sends instructions to the relevant regional AHVLA office to initiate enforcement action.

For non-Group B/D/C isolates no electronic alert is issued.

The audit team saw evidence of several electronic email alerts and records of enforcement actions taken by the CA.

All official sample submission and test results forms, together with farm compliance inspection records (SL47 forms), are sent to SSC. SSC keeps a spreadsheet database of official sampling carried out and of *Salmonella* positive test results. No central database exists for FBOs’ own-check sampling.

A protocol is in place, between the laboratories approved for testing within the SNCPs and the CCA, for monthly reporting of FBOs’ own-check test results. This report includes e.g. number of

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\(^3\) Official procedures following a positive result may differ in Northern Ireland.
samples tested in different poultry populations; sampling frequency, number of positives per *Salmonella* serotypes, etc.

Based on the collected and collated data, quarterly and annual reports are prepared by AHVLA for each of the SNCPs. The reports provide the total number of flocks found to be positive for *Salmonella* and detail all of the *Salmonella* serovars identified, compliance reports and official action taken. The annual reports also provide the estimated prevalence of the regulated serovars for each SNCP.

The audit team was informed by the CA that there is no mandatory *Salmonella* vaccination in the UK within the SNCPs. *Salmonella* vaccines which have marketing authorisation may be used on a voluntary basis. There is no central database recording vaccine usage.

The audit team was informed by the CA that the verification of implementation of FBOs’ sampling is carried out during official sampling and in addition, in the laying hen sector during official inspection visits to verify the hygiene conditions of the laying holding by CAs' Egg Marketing Inspectors. A standard checklist (form SL47) is used for this purpose by AHVLA staff.

When official sampling is delegated to ICBs (turkey and laying hens farms who chose to be part of FAS), own-check sampling is verified by ICBs. If any non-compliance related to the implementation of the SNCP (biosecurity condition, own-check sampling) is detected, it is recorded on the farm audit checklist filled out during the audits performed by ICBs against FAS standards. As explained earlier, (see Chapter 5.2) the ICB audit reports are not communicated to the CA. The CA informed the audit team that they plan to introduce a form similar to that currently used by the CA (form SL47) for reporting the results of these ICB controls on FBO own-check sampling.

**Conclusions**

Tools are available for the CA to monitor the implementation of the SNCPs. However, in the areas where specific tasks related to official controls are delegated to ICBs, the CA's verification on implementation of the SNCPs is compromised by the lack of communication of results by control bodies to the CA.

### 5.4 SNCP for Breeding Hens

**Legal requirements**

Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 outlines how targets shall be established for the reduction of the prevalence of zoonoses, including *Salmonella*. The target for breeding hens has been fixed by Commission Regulation (EU) No 200/2010. To achieve the targets, member states have to implement a SNCP in breeding hens, including detailed sampling rules both for FBOs and for the official services. The requirements applicable until March 2010 were contained in Regulation (EC) No 1003/2005.

**Audit findings**

The SNCP for breeding flocks is implemented in the regions visited and based on sampling at the holding.

The audit team noted that although it is not mandatory either under the programmes or under EU legislation, vaccination against ST/SE was carried out in all flocks visited. Before restocking, environmental swab samples were taken by the FBO and analysed for Total Viable Count and for *Salmonella*.

The audit team also noted that both own-check and official sampling were carried out in compliance with EU legislation regarding the frequency and protocol applied. The audit team saw evidence that
in 2009 derogation was granted by the CA to FBOs to permit sampling to be carried out every three weeks (instead of every two weeks) as the UK had achieved the EU target for the reduction of *Salmonella* prevalence for at least two consecutive calendar years.

The audit team reviewed documentation of one positive case in 2010 where monophasic strains of ST were detected in FBO's own-check samples. An electronic email alert was generated by the NRL after the group result (Group B) was available and official confirmatory samples were taken (five pairs of boot swabs tested individually). An administrative check was performed on the use of antimicrobials. At the same time restrictive measures were imposed on the flock by the CA (e.g. ban on the movement of animals, hatching eggs, feed, litter, etc.).

Once the monophasic ST was identified by NRL in both FBO samples and in official confirmatory samples, the positive flock was slaughtered and eggs/feedstuffs were disposed of as animal by-products. After cleaning and disinfection of the affected house, official environmental samples were taken. The house remained under restriction until the environmental samples tested negative. Official samples were taken from all flocks on premises three times over the next 12 month-period which goes beyond EU requirements. In addition, an epidemiological investigation was carried out (“ZO4 visit”).

The audit team was informed by the CA that in the case of detection of SE/ST in FBOs’ own-check samples, official confirmatory sampling may be carried out e.g. if the samples were tested in a private laboratory and *Salmonella* was not detected previously. According to the data provided by the CA, in 2012 in breeding flocks of *Gallus gallus* five FBO samples turned out to be positive for *Salmonella* spp Groups B, C or D. Only one sample turned out to be positive for a target serovar and only one confirmatory sampling was carried out and tested negative.

The audit team was informed by the CA in the case of detection of SE/ST in official samples, no confirmatory sampling is carried out and the affected flock is slaughtered. Financial compensation is granted to the FBOs concerned.

**Conclusions**

The implementation of the SNCP for the population of breeding hens of *Gallus gallus* is in compliance with EU legislation.

### 5.5 SNCP FOR LAYING HENS

**Legal requirements**

Both Regulations (EC) No 2160/2003 and (EU) No 517/2011 lay down rules for SNCPs for populations of laying hen of *Gallus gallus* in Member States. The requirements applicable until May 2011 were outlined in Regulation (EC) No 1168/2006.

**Audit findings**

The audit team noted that the SNCP for laying flocks is implemented in all regions visited.

Although it is not mandatory either under the programmes or under EU legislation, vaccination against ST/SE was carried out in all flocks visited. However, the audit team was informed by the CA that vaccination is mandatory for holdings which are members of the largest FAS (approximately 90 % of UK egg production is covered under this specific scheme).

The audit team noted that flocks were accompanied with a “Passport” from the hatchery to slaughter. This Passport is compulsory for scheme members and contains all the information necessary to ensure full traceability of flocks (e.g. flock identification, vaccination, *Salmonella* testing during rearing and laying period, veterinary medical treatments, etc.).
In holdings, before restocking of houses, environmental swab samples are taken by the FBO and analysed for Total Viable Count and for Salmonella.

The audit team noted in the laying hen holdings visited that both own-check and official sampling were carried out in compliance with EU legislation as regards frequency of sampling.

The audit team noted some deficiencies related to own-check sample weight in one of the holdings visited. Although it was specified in the sample submission forms that the total weight of two faecal samples were 300 g, on several occasions the laboratory report clearly indicated that the weight of each sample was insufficient. Moreover, the laboratory did not reject these non-compliant samples. Neither the CA nor the ICB auditor detected this deficiency during their inspection visits. The audit team was informed by the CA that when the ICB learnt from the CA that non-compliances had been detected by the FVO audit team in this farm, the FBO concerned was requested by the ICB to take immediate corrective actions (i.e. resampling of the flock). Furthermore, eggs will not be allowed to enter the market under the FAS until Salmonella test results become available.

Under the SNCP for laying hens, when SE/ST has been isolated during an official routine sampling, all restrictive measures laid down in Annex II Part D to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 are taken. At this stage, according to the SNCP, FBO can request further official testing in order to exclude initial false positive results by using one of the sampling protocols laid down in point 4(b) of Annex II Part D to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003. The audit team reviewed such cases and also noted that the absence of the use of antimicrobials was verified through documentary check of FBOs’ records. If the presence of SE/ST is not confirmed, the measures are lifted and the flock is considered as a negative flock. If the initial positive results are confirmed restrictive measures applied against the flock will remain in force and in addition, all other laying flocks on the holding are sampled.

The CA explained to the audit team that under the SNCP if a layer flock tests positive in own-check analyses for the targeted serovars, the CA carries out a routine official confirmatory sampling (within 48 hours) by using the normal sampling protocol (as per paragraph 2.2.2 of the Annex to Regulation (EC) 517/2011). No official restrictive measures are applied against the flock or the eggs until results of confirmatory sampling are available.

If the result of this official confirmatory sampling is positive, all eggs from that flock are restricted. FBO can request further official testing by using one of the sampling protocols laid down in point 4(b) of Annex II Part D to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003. The FBO will pay the cost of the testing when it has been completed. If the presence of the targeted serovars is confirmed, the eggs must be marked and sold as Class B eggs or disposed of as animal by-products. If the result is negative all the measures are lifted and the flock is considered as a negative flock.

The fact that the CA does not impose restrictive measures on eggs originating from a flock tested positive for the targeted Salmonella serovars in case of own-check sampling is not in compliance with the provisions laid down in Annex II D to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003. These provisions stipulate that eggs shall be considered as Class B eggs if they originate from flocks that are infected with Salmonella serotypes for which a target for reduction has been set. Moreover, the official confirmatory sampling protocol used is not fully in compliance with the provisions laid down in point 4(b) of Annex II Part D to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 (three samples instead of seven samples or 4,000 eggs, etc.).

Conclusions

The SNCP for layers is being implemented, however, with some deficiencies related to sampling protocols used and to the procedures followed by the CA in the case of positive own-check sample results.
5.6 SNCP for Broilers

Legal requirements

Audit findings
The SNCP for broiler flocks is implemented in all regions visited.

The audit team noted that in the broiler holding visited, own-check sampling was carried out in compliance with EU legislation regarding frequency and protocol used. To date this farm had not been selected for official sampling. The audit team also noted that in the cases reviewed, Salmonella samples were taken within three weeks before slaughter in compliance with EU legislation.

Official sampling is carried out by the CA each year as prescribed in the Union legislation i.e. in at least one flock of broilers on 10% of the holdings with more than 5,000 birds. At the start of each calendar year, 10% of holdings are selected (with an additional 20% of holdings selected to ensure that ineligible holdings are replaced if necessary).

The audit team reviewed a case when monophasic strains of ST were detected in an own-check sample (in 2010) in the broiler farm visited. Although in 2010 monophasic strains of ST were not included in the EU target, the CA took the measures required for targeted serovars. For example an electronic email alert was issued, an epidemiological investigation was carried out (“ZO4 visit”), after cleaning and disinfection environmental swabs were taken and official samples were taken from next crops. The epidemiological investigation highlighted that the close proximity of pigs on the same site was the possible source of infection. Advice was given to the FBO to prevent the direct contact between free range birds and pigs.

In the cases reviewed by the audit team FCI included Salmonella test results. The audit team was informed by Food Standards Agency that if the Salmonella test result is missing in the FCI the flock is treated as positive in the slaughterhouse.

Conclusions
The implementation of the SNCP for broilers is overall in compliance with EU requirements.

5.7 SNCP for Turkeys

Legal requirements

Audit findings

Breeding turkeys

The audit team noted that the SNCP for breeding turkey flocks is implemented in the region visited. In the breeding turkey holding visited, own-check sampling was carried out in compliance with EU legislation regarding sampling frequency. However, the audit team noted that five pairs of boot swabs taken by the FBO were pooled for analyses into one pool whilst the relevant EU legislation specifies that samples may be pooled into a minimum of two pools.

The audit team noted that in some cases birds were under the effect of antimicrobials (medicated
feed) when own-check samples were taken (see also Chapter 5.2.).

Under the previous applicable legislation only 10% of parent holdings were subject to official sampling. The audit team was informed by the CA that in 2013 all breeding turkey flocks between 30 and 45 weeks of age will be officially sampled as required under Regulation (EU) No 1190/2012 which entered into force in December 2012. As part of the FAS, the farm was regularly audited by the ICB and verification of implementation of FBO’s own-checks is part of this audit. However, the result of the assessment is not communicated to the CA (see Chapter 5.2.).

The audit team was informed by the CA that since 2010 there have been no positive results from samples of breeding turkey flocks tested for the targeted *Salmonella* serovars.

**Fattening turkeys**

The audit team noted that in the fattening turkey holding visited, own-check sampling was carried out in compliance with EU legislation regarding frequency and protocol used. To date the farm had not been selected for official sampling. The audit team also noted that in the cases reviewed, *Salmonella* samples were taken within six weeks before slaughter in compliance with EU legislation (birds were kept more than 100 days).

Official sampling is carried out by the CA or by the ICB (for those under FAS) each year of at least one flock of turkeys on 10% of the holdings with more than 500 birds as required under Regulation (EU) No 1190/2012. At the start of each calendar year, 10% of holdings are selected by the CA (with an additional 20% of holdings selected to ensure that ineligible holdings are replaced if necessary). Two lists are created, one list for use by the ICB (sampling of flocks under FAS) and the other one for use by AHVLA staff (sampling of flocks outside FAS).

According to the information provided by the CA, in 2012, the 10% target for official sampling of holdings was achieved in GB.

The farm visited was regularly audited by the ICB as a member of the FAS and verification of implementation of FBO’s own-checks is part of this audit. However, the result of the assessment is not communicated to the CA (see Chapter 5.2.).

In the cases reviewed by the audit team FCI included *Salmonella* test results.

**Conclusions**

The implementation of the SNCP for turkeys is overall satisfactory, however, with some deficiencies related to sampling protocols used for FBO samples.

### 5.8 Laboratories

**Legal requirements**

Article 33 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 lays down the responsibilities and tasks of the NRLs designated by the Member States.

Article 12 (2) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires CAs to only designate official laboratories that fulfil certain quality standards.

Additionally, Article 12 of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 lays down requirements for laboratories participating in SNCPs, including the need to apply quality assurance systems and to participate in collaborative testing.

The relevant regulations for the different poultry populations lay down rules for the detection method (ISO 6579 Annex D) and serotyping method (Kaufmann-White scheme) to be used in the context of SNCPs.
Audit findings

In GB only laboratories approved by Defra and the Devolved Governments can perform analyses within the SNCPs. In order to be approved a laboratory must be accredited to ISO 17025 by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) and must regularly participate in proficiency tests organised by AHVLA. Approval is renewed annually. The list of approved laboratories is publicly available on the CAs’ websites. The audit team was informed by the CA that if a serious problem was detected (including suspension of ISO accreditation), the CA would remove the laboratory from the list.

According to the data received from the CA three laboratories (including the NRL) test official SNCP samples in GB and one in Northern Ireland. FBOs’ own-check samples are either tested in these official laboratories or in any of the approved private laboratories. Serotyping of all isolates from SNCPs, phage typing, tests for live vaccine strains and molecular tests to confirm strains of monophasic ST are carried out at the NRL.

The audit team was informed by the CA that proficiency tests within the SNCPs are organised on a quarterly basis.

The audit team visited one official and one private testing laboratory. Both laboratories visited were accredited, were approved by Defra and had adequate equipment and knowledgeable staff. The method used (ISO 6579 2002 Annex D) were under the scope of accreditation. The audit team saw evidence that staff regularly participate in training.

The laboratory staff provided the audit team in both laboratories visited with copies of procedures for rejecting non-compliant samples taken within the framework of SNCPs. This is an important role of the laboratory since not all submission forms contain for example the weight of faecal samples or number of sample units taken (see Chapter 5.3.).

As it was pointed out in Chapter 5.5 of this report the audit team saw examples of non-compliant samples (not in the visited laboratories) being accepted and tested.

Both laboratories visited regularly participate in proficiency tests with satisfactory results. The audit team saw evidence that the visited official laboratory indirectly participated in the proficiency tests organised by the European Union Reference Laboratory (EURL). For these proficiency tests the samples received from the EURL were distributed to other AHVLA official laboratories by the NRL.

Conclusions

Laboratories involved in the SNCPs are in compliance with the requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003.

6 Overall Conclusions

The UK SNCPs are implemented in all regions and cover all poultry populations. In general, official and FBOs’ own-check sampling are carried out in line with EU legislation with some deficiencies related to sampling protocols. However, in the areas where official controls are delegated to ICBs, the system cannot provide guarantees to the CAs that the requirements related to the control programmes are properly implemented regarding verification of FBOs' own-checks. This is mainly due to the unstructured nature of communication of results of operator auditing by control bodies to the CAs as well as to the absence of an auditing system on these control bodies.
# Closing Meeting

During the closing meeting held in Weybridge on 20 June 2013, the audit team presented the findings and preliminary conclusions of the audit to the CAs.

During this meeting, the CCA acknowledged the FVO's findings and undertook to address them.

# Recommendations

The CCA should provide Commission services with guarantees and an action plan, including a timetable for its completion, within twenty five working days of receipt of the report in order to address all the deficiencies identified and in particular, the following recommendations:

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<th>№.</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Where specific tasks related to official controls are delegated to one or more control bodies, the CCA should ensure that the results of the controls carried out by the control bodies are communicated to the CCA on a regular basis in compliance with the requirements of Article 5(2)(e) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Where specific tasks related to official controls are delegated to one or more control bodies, the CCA should ensure that audits or inspections of control bodies are organised by the delegating competent authority in compliance with the requirements of Article 5(3) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>The CCA should ensure that official controls are carried out regularly, at any stages of production (in particular on the farms), on a risk basis and, with an appropriate frequency, including controls on FBO compliance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 (Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004).</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The CCA should ensure that the monitoring and sampling programme applied in laying flocks is fully compliant with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 and Regulation (EU) No 517/2011, in particular regarding sampling protocol used and the procedures to be followed in the case of positive own-check sample results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The CCA should ensure that the monitoring and sampling programme applied in turkeys is fully compliant with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 and Regulation (EU) No 1190/2012, in particular regarding sampling protocol used.</td>
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The competent authority's response to the recommendations can be found at:

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<th>Legal Reference</th>
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