



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS PATHOGENS

Revised Terms of Reference

Issue

New or revised Terms of Reference for ACDP and two of its subgroups are provided for members' consideration and approval.

Background

The Government's review of Advisory Non-Departmental Public Bodies (ANDPBs), announced on 14th October 2010, concluded that ACDP should be reconfigured as an expert committee of the Department of Health (DH). ACDP will continue to function as a tripartite committee, but will advise the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and DH and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Ministers through departmental officials.

The review also concluded that the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC – see Annex A for Terms of Reference) should be abolished and its functions transferred to DH, DH propose that in future these functions be delivered by ACDP. SEAC provided advice to DH, Defra and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), and thus ACDP will in future also provide advice to the FSA on TSEs. Advice will also be provided to the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Revised ACDP Terms of Reference

In light of these structural changes ACDP's Terms of Reference (see Annex A) have been revised as follows:

“To provide independent scientific advice to the Health and Safety Executive, and Ministers for the Department of Health and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and their counterparts under devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as required, on all aspects of hazards and risks to workers and others from exposure to pathogens. In addition, to provide the Food Standards Agency with

independent scientific risk assessment advice on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.”

New ACDP TSE risk assessment subgroup

SEAC’s functions will in future be delivered by ACDP via a new TSE risk assessment subgroup to be set up in the next few months with the following proposed Terms of Reference:

“To provide scientifically based assessment of risk from TSEs in relation to food safety, public and animal health issues, taking appropriate account of scientific uncertainty and assumptions in formulating advice.”

This subgroup will meet on an ad-hoc basis to provide risk assessment advice to DH, Defra, HSE and FSA (and the devolved administrations) when required.

ACDP TSE risk management subgroup

ACDP’s existing TSE Working Group will be renamed to distinguish its risk management functions from the new subgroup’s risk assessment functions. The TSE Working Group’s Terms of Reference (see Annex A) have been slightly amended as follows:

“To provide practical, scientifically based advice on the management of risks from transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), in order to limit or reduce the risks of exposure to, or transmission of, TSEs. To provide such advice to ACDP as requested, and to handle issues as referred, taking into account the work of other relevant bodies.”

Action

Members are asked to consider and approve the new or revised Terms of Reference.

Secretariat

January 2011

Current ACDP Terms of Reference

“To advise the Health and Safety Executive, and Ministers for the Department of Health and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and their counterparts under devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as required, on all aspects of hazards and risks to workers and others from exposure to pathogens.”

Current ACDP TSE Working Group Terms of Reference

"To provide practical, scientifically based advice on the management of risks from transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), in order to limit or reduce the risks of human exposure to, or transmission of, TSEs in healthcare and other occupational settings. To provide advice to ACDP, SEAC and Government Departments, as requested, and to handle issues referred by those bodies, taking into account the work of other relevant bodies."

SEAC Terms of Reference

“To advise on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) at the request of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department of Health, Food Standards Agency, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Provide independent scientific advice on food safety, public and animal health issues relating to TSEs taking account of the remits of other bodies with related responsibilities.

Provide scientifically based assessment of risk from TSEs to public and animal health and food safety taking appropriate account of scientific uncertainty and assumptions in formulating advice. The committee will convey the nature and extent of such uncertainties with the advice.

Advise on important general principles or new scientific discoveries in TSEs to assist in the identification of new or emerging TSE risks for public, animal health and food.

Advise on the scientific basis and risks associated with the introduction of new control measures or the reduction, phasing out or withdrawal of current control measures which are in place to protect public health or animal health from TSEs.

Identify where research is desirable to reduce the scientific uncertainty and inform the assessment of public and animal health and food safety risks relating to TSEs.”