

Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee

Food Standards Sub-Committee

Survey SF35 – Microbiological quality of chicken liver pate sold by caterers with a particular emphasis on pate prepared on the premises

The Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC) co-ordinates the food law enforcement, sampling and surveillance activities of Scottish local authorities and comprises representatives of central and local government, professional organisations, consumers and industry.

The committee provides a forum for the discussion of topics relevant to any current problems and may initiate surveys or projects or co-ordinate specific investigations initiated by the local Food Liaison Groups that have been set up in four geographical areas.

Food Liaison Groups consist of representatives from Scottish local authorities and are concerned with consistency of food law enforcement activities in their area.

The remit of the Food Standards Sub Committee (FSSC) is to act as a focus group for delivering the Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee's strategic aims by considering and recommending appropriate measures for the practical implementation of any food standards initiatives remitted to them from the Committee.

Summary

Scottish local authority environmental health departments took 39 samples of chicken or duck pates from caterers, during the period November 2013 – March 2014. The samples were submitted to partner Public Analyst laboratories.

Neither *Salmonella* spp nor *Campylobacter* spp were detected in any of the samples.

Background

The Scottish Food Enforcement Liaison Committee (SFELC) Research Working Group (RWG) (now the Sampling and Surveillance Working Group – SSWG) has compiled an annual report on food sampling in Scotland since 2008. The Group analyses data held on the UK Food Surveillance System (UKFSS) on sampling and analysis activity by Scotland's environmental health departments and their public analyst partners.

Campylobacter is the most common cause of food related illness in the UK. It is often associated with poultry. Consumption of inadequately cooked chicken is a potential route of infection and the preparation of pates using traditional methods by caterers has been identified as a particular risk in previous incidents. In their report on 2012 samples the RWG recommended a survey of microbiological quality, focussing on *Campylobacter*, of chicken liver pate sold by caterers with a particular emphasis on pate prepared on the premises.

This survey aimed to assess the microbiological quality of chicken liver pates sold to consumers by caterers in Scotland.

Sampling

Local authority environmental health departments took samples of chicken pate, concentrating on pate prepared on the premises, from caterers during the period November 2013 – March 2014. The samples were submitted to partner Public Analyst laboratories.

Sampling and analysis for survey samples was carried out in accordance with an agreed protocol. Samples were examined for the presence of Salmonella spp and Campylobacter spp .

Results

Interrogation of UK Food Surveillance System (UKFSS) identified 39 samples taken for the survey during the study period.

The product descriptions of the samples taken are summarised in Table 1:

Product description	Number of samples
Chicken liver pate	35
Chicken liver & bacon pate	2
Chicken liver parfait	1
Duck liver pate	1
Total	39

Table 1 – Description of samples

Neither Salmonella spp nor Campylobacter spp were detected in any of the samples.

Discussion

The survey protocol called for 100 samples to be taken. Only 39 samples have been identified on UKFSS. This makes detailed consideration of the results difficult.

Sampling officers reported that caterers had moved away from producing their own pates during the survey period. This may have been due to advice issued at the time by FSA and a focus on the production of these products during local authority food safety inspections. [caterers may well have moved to using pate supplied by third parties which tend to be subjected to a specific food safety related heat treatment during processing.

The results from the survey, however, are encouraging as neither Salmonella spp nor Campylobacter spp were detected in any of the samples.

The continued sampling of pates has remained a recommendation in the RWG and SSWG's subsequent reports.

Recommendations

- Authorised officers carrying out food hygiene inspections at caterers should continue to give particular consideration to any on-site production of poultry liver pates and similar products