

Book Review.

Second Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Meat Hygiene. (FAO/WHO, Rome, 1962).

The first report of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Meat Hygiene was published in 1955. It was confined to a discussion of problems associated with domestic livestock and emphasized those meat hygiene questions mainly associated with the abattoir and the investigation and prevention of meat-borne diseases in man. The second report broadens the scope of the discussion but at the same time includes many parts of the first report so that this publication presents a complete treatment of the subject.

The report stresses the point that meat hygiene measures should cover the period from a time on the farm before the animal is transported to the abattoir, through its journey to and through the abattoir until the final meat product is consumed. It also includes a separate section on meat hygiene as it applies to poultry although it points out that the underlying principles of hygiene are the same for all types of food animals. The special problems of meat hygiene in warm weather countries are also included as well as factors that have recently developed including the use of irradiation and antibiotics for meat preservation, and the presence of radio-nuclides, insecticides and other residues of possible toxicity, including those of pharmaceutical preparations and agricultural chemicals.

The committee has concentrated on general principles, rather than on specific detailed recommendations, bearing in mind factors pertinent to both economically advanced and developing countries. Although general principles only are stated a bibliography gives further papers in which detailed information can be obtained on the various topics.

The main underlying principle in the report is that meat provides an excellent source of protein for human nutrition and that the present world scarcity of protein makes it necessary to conserve and utilize meat supplies to their fullest extent. This emphasises the need for a meat hygiene service which will ensure a wholesome product for human consumption with improved keeping qualities, and which will make an important contribution to livestock disease control.

In discussing the principles and objectives of meat hygiene in relation to quality and standards a list of controls necessary to ensure a safe meat supply is given as follows :—

1. The use of pharmaceutical preparations and agricultural chemicals on the farm.
2. Care of the animal during transport and at collecting centres and depots.
3. Examination of the animal before slaughter to ensure the elimination of unfit animals.
4. Examination of the carcase and parts of the carcase immediately after slaughter, to separate the normal wholesome product for human food from diseased or otherwise unfit material.
5. Separation of unfit material from edible products in a way that will avoid contaminating edible products.
6. Removal and destruction of all diseased and otherwise unfit materials to ensure their elimination from the food supply.
7. Adoption of such environmental sanitation controls as will obviate the contamination of edible products.
8. Prohibition of the addition of harmful material in the handling and preparation of the edible products.
9. Adequate hygienic supervision of meat-processing plants, food stores and restaurant kitchens to ensure complete sanitation control of the meat and meat products to the point of consumption.

The fulfilment of the basic principles of meat hygiene by the rigid application of these controls should be the aim in all communities.

The report outlines the methods of reporting outbreaks of "food-borne infections and intoxications" (this phrase being recommended as the best general term describing illness due to the ingestion of contaminated foodstuffs) and also points out that in all countries the reporting of food-borne infections and intoxications is incomplete. A firm recommendation that reporting methods must be improved is included.

It is unfortunate that the Annex of the Report on the Design of Abattoirs has been simply reprinted from the earlier report of the committee because the information is out of date. However, reference is made to the later publication of the United States Department of Agriculture which gives more up-to-date details.

In stating the special problems of meat hygiene in tropical and developing countries the point is made that good meat hygiene practices cannot be legislated into existence where there is no sound economic basis. A second point made is that meat, probably more than any other food product, is subject to the strictures, taboos and restrictions imposed by religious and other prejudices so that all good meat hygiene practices although they produce a safe and wholesome

product may violate these deep rooted customs. Both these points have a bearing on meat consumption in this Territory especially the first one in relation to the slaughter of village pigs. However in some countries rapid progress has been made where new procedures have been introduced into primitive areas demonstrating greater efficiency and economy of preparation of meat for consumption. Similar progress could be expected here.

The report is a very valuable publication for all those involved in the preparation of meat for consumption and in particular provides a valuable addition to the small amount of current information on the broad aspects of meat hygiene.

T. L. Rothwell.

Port Moresby. V. P. Bloink, Government Printer.—12410/7.64.



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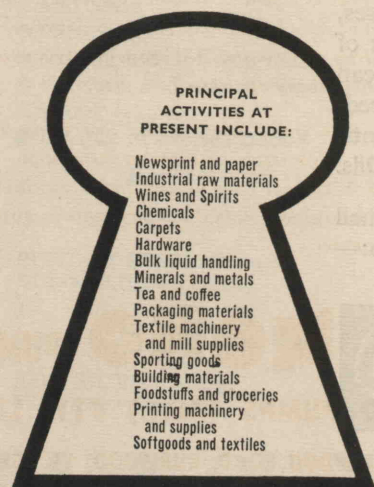
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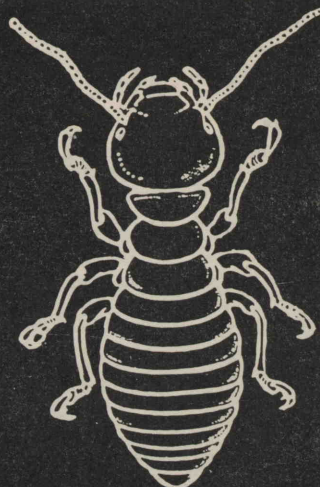
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