

Review of MHA: Process Monitoring

Project code
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Prepared by
Andreas Kiermeier
John Sumner
Jessica Jolley

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Project description

As part of the Export Meat Modernisation project, SARDI has worked with industry and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to develop a new microbiological testing regime and Meat Hygiene Assessment 3: Product Monitoring. The final element, Meat Hygiene Assessment 3: Process Monitoring and Analysis, has reached final stages of development.

The current version (MHA 2: Process Monitoring) is both highly prescriptive and has become a receptacle for elements not associated primarily with process monitoring e.g. country requirements. It dates from 2002 and was designed to satisfy requirements for the USA market, Australia's main market at that time.

Project content

The project phases included:

1. An industry survey of how 18 establishments (9 beef, 5 sheep, 3 pork and 1 game meat) undertake MHA 2: Process Monitoring, together with a brief survey of how some of Australia's main markets assess Process Monitoring; the former established great variability across the 18 establishments surveyed, while the latter indicated major export markets having no formal process monitoring system (USA/Canada/NZ/EU).
2. The project was guided by a Reference Panel comprising representatives from industry, Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC), Australian Meat Processor Council (AMPC) and DAFF, together with representatives from companies which had expressed interest in collaborating with the project.
3. SARDI provided a number of discussion and option papers to their advisory groups which led to a decision that the proposed MHA 3: Process Monitoring have significant change from the current (MHA 2) version; this was accommodated in the final version.

Project outcome

The current review of MHA 2: Process Monitoring has led to the development of MHA 3: Process Monitoring and Analysis, a system which:

1. Reverts to the original intention of monitoring the slaughter-dressing-packing-refrigeration-load-out continuum; aspects of overseas programs, livestock handling and animal welfare are omitted for monitoring elsewhere.
2. Is risk-based – offering the opportunity for an establishment to identify those stations along the process chain that require more, or less, monitoring.
3. Has a single frequency of monitoring, set by the establishment in line with risk.
4. Records deviations and removes the terms Marginal/Acceptable/Unacceptable.
5. Has no scoring system and hence no rating or Conformity Index.
6. Reviews deviations to work instructions at individual workstations, Product Monitoring data, ZT findings and microbiological monitoring results weekly.
7. Focuses on using monitoring data to improve unit operations, leading to a change in title to MHA 3: Process Monitoring and Analysis.

Benefit for industry

- ◆ MHA 3: Process Monitoring and Analysis, endorsed by a reference panel comprising industry, DAFF, AMIC and AMPC, comprises systems which promote feedback and improvement in process monitoring.
- ◆ The proposed MHA 3: Process Monitoring and Analysis system will undergo feasibility trials prior to implementation industry-wide by DAFF.