
Ensure that meat testing remains on the menu

by Dr Steve Chambers, Sales and Marketing, Neogen Europe.

Following on from the horse meat scandal of 2013, renewed calls have been made to ensure that increased meat testing levels do not drop back down to their previously low levels, after a recent report from the Food Standards Agency claimed that less than five samples per day were being examined for authenticity in the run up to the horse meat scandal.

The now infamous January 2013 discovery of horse and pig DNA in Ireland, in what was labelled as a beef product, kick-started a flurry of changes to regulatory requirements for meat speciation testing. Perhaps more importantly, for the long term future of the meat industry, the discovery shattered the trust of many consumers.

Until last year, most consumers had no

reason to believe there was anything other than beef in a product labelled as beef, or any other meat product for that matter. They trusted what they saw on the label. We now know that is not necessarily the case.

Rebuilding trust

Regaining that broken trust has not and will not be easy. A recent survey carried out by research company, TNS Omnibus, quizzed over 2,000 UK adults. A worryingly high 63% of those surveyed stated that their trust had been dented by the so-called horsegate controversy, as well as other food labelling slip ups.

The independent Elliot review, due to report this month, will help to highlight the extent to which counterfeit meat has penetrated food distribution networks.

Whilst it will be for the UK government to implement any improvements to current legislation, many manufacturers have already expanded their speciation testing.

Meat speciation testing

Neogen's established range of meat speciation testing options has been used for over 10 years by numerous food industry laboratories and government food control agencies around the world.



Their on-site meat speciation testing options were widely used in the wake of the crisis, with the added support gained from their experience.

At a time when trust is key, the expertise and experience that Neogen have gathered over the years can help those looking to develop their meat speciation testing.

Many companies in the food industry looking to test their meat products for species composition cannot perform the tests on-site. Neogen offers expert, reliable UKAS-accredited DNA based contract laboratory services for meat speciation that are carried out by highly trained scientific analysts using state-of-the-art equipment.

Qualitative UKAS-accredited testing is available for eight species, including horse, cow, pig, sheep, rabbit, chicken, turkey and goat. In addition, quantitative DNA testing is available for the same range of species. ■

