Minutes of the 3rd Lead Ammunition Group meeting

6 July 2010

Defra offices – London

Attendees:
Mr John Swift - British Association of Shooting and Conservation (Chair)
Dr Mark Avery – RSPB
Mr John Batley - Gun Trade Association
Mr Stephen Crouch - National Game Dealers Association
Mr Adrian Gane - Country Land and Business Association
Mr Robert Gray - Countryside Alliance
Prof. Len Levy - Institute of Environment and Health
Dr Deborah Pain - Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
Dr Stephen Tapper - Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Dr James Kirkwood - Universities Federation for Animal Welfare

Secretariat
Ms Lucy Munro – Defra

1. Apologies, welcome and introductions

1.1 Apologies were received from Tim Andrews (Defra).

1.2 Discussion of the applicability of economic impacts was requested as an item for A.O.B.

2. Review and discussion of published minutes of the 28 May meeting

2.1 There were no further comments on the published minutes of the second meeting on 28 May.

2. 2 Thanks were expressed to the secretariat for their support.

3. Review of Actions from last meeting

3.1. FSA game consumption research timeframe and design (Item 3.5) – Chair

3.1.1 The Group noted that FSA had circulated a response to the action points assigned to them and specifically that the FSA research requirement had been published on 2 July 2010 and can be viewed at the following link:
http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/how_we_work/procurement/nonresreq/pau303

3.1.2 The anticipated contract duration is from September 2010 to March 2011 and is for work within Scotland.

3.1.3 The Group discussed the timeframe and how the research requirement related to the Group's work as there were overlapping areas of interest, and specifically whether the Group could reach conclusions while this research was incomplete. It was noted that the FSA tender document included risk assessment. The group questioned the geographical focus of Scotland and the applicability of the study's results to England.

3.1.4 The Group concluded that it would wish to be able to assess the results of this research and assumed they would be available before the Group had to prepare its own progress report. It was noted that the FSA focused on identifying high-level consumers of game, although it was unclear how the Scottish remit of the study would influence this.

3.1.5 The Group agreed to proceed with its own work whilst wishing to be better informed about the thinking behind the FSA contract. The group indicated that as results of a risk assessment could be of great use in the LAG's deliberations, the LAG could have had a useful input to the study's terms of reference.

Action 3.1 The Chair agreed to invite FSA officials to attend the next meeting.

3.2 Disclaimer regarding references to papers etc (Item 5.7) – TA/LM

3.2.1 Two options for the disclaimer wording for the information tab on the website were discussed.

3.2.2 The Group agreed to use:

"The documents listed below will be duly considered by the Lead Ammunition Group as they formulate their advice to Defra and the Food Standards Agency. The list will be added to over the course of the Group's work and you are welcome to draw other sources of evidence to the Group's attention. The reports posted here are for information only and do not in any way reflect the views of the Group in relation to the documents' findings or recommendations."

3.2.3 The Group noted that not all material could be included due to copyright restrictions. However references could be used where appropriate.

3.3 Web page for legal framework (items 5.21 and 7.2) – Chair/PES/Web team

Apologies were expressed that this work remained to be completed when the legal references have been listed. Post meeting note[1].

3.4 Batley subgroup proposal (Item 6.12) – JB main item

Apologies were expressed as this work had been delayed.

3.5 Primary Evidence subgroup progress report (Item 7.3) – LL main item

To be discussed under item 4.

3.6 Primary Evidence subgroup list of key references (Item 7.3) – LL

To be discussed under item 4.

3.7 Examples of possible forms of progress report (Item 7.5) – TA/LM

The Group noted that FSA and Defra do not have a specific template for the report. However both parties would like the report to contain presentation of the evidence, discussions and recommendations of the group.

Examples of reports will be available from the Defra website.

3.8 Gantt chart update (Item 7.5) – TA

Apologies were received as this action was yet to be completed.

3.9 Incidents of livestock exposure (Item 9.1) – Chair

3.9.1 FSA had provided a summary of the incidents referred to in the Group's first meeting. These are publicly available as Chemical Food Safety reports produced by the VLA and can be found at http://www.defra.gov.uk/vla/reports/rep_food.htm

3.9.2 It was agreed that this reference should be listed as primary evidence.

3.9.3 The Chair confirmed that the publication of results from a membership survey into game consumption was still to be considered by the BASC research advisory committee.

4. Progress report of the Primary Evidence subgroup (LL etc.)

4.1 Prof. Len Levy gave an overview of the subgroup's work to date and thanked the subgroup members for their contributions.

4.2 Two papers had been circulated (1) draft terms of references (ToR) for the subgroup and (2) a draft list of primary evidence references.

4.3 The draft ToR made clear that there are cumulative stages to the process that the group might undertake. The first exercise of gathering primary evidence would be followed by an evaluation of the risks from lead in ammunition under three categories being the risks to wildlife, human health and to human health through uptake of lead by livestock.

4.4 The Group then discussed once again a misunderstanding that had arisen due to the proposed inclusion of non-peer reviewed references in the primary evidence base. The Group confirmed that if advice has to be based on evidence capable of peer review it must first be established what is properly peer reviewed and what is not. Furthermore, the Group confirmed that it would be bizarre to assume that information which was not published in peer reviewed scientific literature might not be considered relevant in any way. It was suggested that the Group itself was a form of peer review or could arrange for peer review.

4.5 The Group discussed once again the question of geographical relevance. It was confirmed that for this gathering exercise the main focus is listing references relevant to the UK. This does not exclude references pertaining to work judged to be of relevance but conducted elsewhere but it will be categorized appropriately. (See earlier minutes)

4.6 The Group noted that the list of primary evidence references cannot be a comprehensive list of the literature which is vast. Judgements would have to be made on what would be key to a properly informed risk assessment.

4.7 The Group agreed that publication of the primary evidence reference list on the website would provide external observers with the opportunity to suggest additional references to be taken into consideration. The Group considered this was a safeguard against selectivity.

Action 3.2 PE subgroup to redraft the ToR and circulate this to the Group. (Once this is agreed by the Group by correspondence it can be published on the website.)

4.8 Further discussion followed on the draft list of publications that had been circulated by the PE subgroup and Prof. Levy explained that the subgroup had put together a list of publications but that the list was still in its early stages. The list would be worked on further and revised in the light of comments.

4.9 The question was raised whether there might be a conflict of interest for members of the PE subgroup who were also authors of listed references. The Group noted the possibility of conflict but agreed that the members of the subgroup are the best placed people to do this work as they have been selected expressly because they have special knowledge of the subject area. Moreover their work should not be excluded simply because they are among the authors, and the majority if not all such publications included will have been subject to independent peer review..

4.10 The Chair congratulated the subgroup for an excellent start and queried whether it would be possible to complete the list so that it might be published by the end of July. The subgroup confirmed that this was still their aim and would work towards this deadline.

Action 3.3 PE subgroup to produce a list of key references for publication by the end of July.

Post meeting note: The PE subgroup report is still in preparation and will be considered at the next meeting.

4.11 It was raised that the Group had earlier discussed receiving a presentation giving an overview of the primary evidence covered by these references. It was explained that such a presentation had not been possible in time for this meeting and the Chair stressed that any such presentation must avoid giving the impression that the Group was being influenced at an early stage to a particular point of view.

4.12 Group members agreed that it would be valuable for someone with direct expertise in the EFSA report to make a presentation. The Group agreed to seek experts to present to the Group on the WHO research and the EFSA report. It was queried whether undue weight was being given to the EFSA report but the Group agreed that it was an important report being used in a wide range of policy setting areas; and for this reason it should remain as a referenced report on the website.

5. Risk assessment process – In advance of the Primary Evidence subgroup's recommendations, general thoughts/discussion on the way forward and who should be involved. (All)

5.1 Gratitude was expressed by the PE subgroup chair for the work completed for this. The Chair invited discussion on the way forward. The timeframe was originally for the risk assessment process to begin in September.

5.2 The Chair opened discussions by asking whether the risk assessment process was to be seen as an extension of the PE subgroup's primary evidence work or whether this process should be carried out by the main Group. Guidance was requested as to the form of risk assessment to be used.

5.3 The Group noted that different forms of risk assessment were employed in different circumstances. (The FSA had adopted a "hazard analysis" approach this might be an appropriate methodology but FSA would be needed to explain this).

5.4 One member expressed the view that the model for the risk assessment was not of overriding importance so long as it tackled the risk of exposure to a substance and was fairly standard. The EFSA report was useful for pointing to the possible low-level effects of lead and there was enough evidence to complete a relatively standard risk assessment process.

5.5 The Group noted that it would be necessary to establish where any lead originated - hence to establish any additional dosing from eating game. Risk assessment needed to show the uptake from game as part the total diet.

5.6 The Group noted that lead always poses a risk but that the risk assessment had to determine how much of a risk given levels of lead would pose. These would need to be quantified for different, potentially vulnerable, population groups.

5.7 It was re-iterated that a presentation on the EFSA report would be welcomed. It was agreed that speakers from the team of authors of the EFSA report should be invited to present to the Group. This would most likely be Dr. Benford and Prof. Boobis.

Action 3.4 Prof.Levy to invite Dr Benford and Prof. Boobis to present on the EFSA report at the next meeting.

5.8 Concern was expressed at the volume of work it would require for the main Group to carry out the risk assessment.

5.9 The Chair concluded that the Group needed to know as soon as possible what form the risk assessment might take. From discussion it appeared that the best way forward was to follow a standard methodology rather than the HACCP approach. He invited the Chair of the PE group, Prof. Levy, to bring forward a proposal to the Group for consideration, and suggested that risk assessment might become the second stage for the PE subgroup. If this were the case this subgroup would need to expand within manageable limits to include other representatives. wider stakeholder interests, including shooting groups, to ensure their involvement with the process. A first step for this expanded subgroup would be to ensure appropriate understanding of the background science as there needs to be ownership of any risks however big or small.

Action 3.5 PE subgroup to organise a day's session to deal with the background science established so far.

5. 10 The Chair invited Group members to consider who might be proposed to join an expanded PE subgroup for the purpose of risk assessment, subject to further consultation. Representatives from the food industry, cartridge manufacturers, game shooting and the deer management/venison side were suggested.

Post meeting note: Further discussion on the above issue will take place at the next meeting before any conclusions are drawn.

5.11 It was suggested that human health issues should be tackled before issues concerned with wildlife and the Chair gained agreement for this. It was suggested that the human health background might be covered fairly quickly in a group with relatively few invitees.

5.12 It was asked when this first extended meeting might take place and it was anticipated that this might take two months to put together.

5.13 It was reaffirmed that the immediate objective was to inform the main Group. This was agreed but the PE subgroup will also need to undergo a similar process.

5.14 It was pointed out that the risk assessment process might need to be established before inviting the wider participants.

Action 3.6 PE subgroup to propose to the Group how the risk assessment process might be taken forward.

Action 3.7 The Group to give thought to those who might be invited to participate in the risk assessment process should the expansion of the subgroup be agreed.

Action 3.8 PE subgroup to propose how a meeting of an extended PE subgroup might be organised i.e. a day's session to cover the background science and inform everyone on the wider issues concerning the human health aspects.

6. CLA Game Fair invitation to LAG to make progress report and answer questions (Chair)

6.1 The Chair reported that Fiona Eastman of the CLA had been in touch with him to suggest a presentation on lead at the Game Fair. He had responded that a progress report on LAG would be appropriate and it was agreed that this would be helpful if some members of the group were available. Some members agreed that this would be a constructive thing to do and agreed to take part. The proposal was for a session at 14:30 on Saturday in the Game Fair Theatre.

7. Communications – reporting press relations and stakeholder engagement (All)

7.1 At the first meeting it had been agreed that the Chair would be the central contact point for all press enquiries. In this capacity the Chair reported that he had given a detailed briefing to a journalist at the Guardian who was exploring the work of the Group. The journalist had noted that it was early days for the Group and would wait until further developments.

7.3 The Chair asked whether there had been any further press or stakeholder engagement. No further media issues were reported.

8. Any other business

8.1 The applicability of economic impacts was raised. A member of the Group asked whether there was a role for a subgroup to look purely at economic impacts. It was agreed that the risk assessment would first need to establish the risks and any consequential management options

before any such exercise would be appropriate. If that situation arises economic impact would fall amongst other considerations to be taken into account.

8.2 It was proposed that Defra/FSA should be asked to provide for the travel expenses of the experts invited to present at the next meeting.

9. Date of the next meeting

9.1 30 July and 6 August were the two dates put forward for the next meeting followed by 8 October (to be the notional date for covering wildlife risks) and 5 November.

Post meeting note: The date of the next meeting has been postponed to a date to be agreed in September.

Summary of Action points arising from this meeting

Action 3.1 The Chair agreed to repeat his invitation to FSA officials to attend the next meeting.

Action 3.2 PE subgroup to redraft the ToR and circulate this to the group

Action 3.3 PE subgroup to produce a list of key references for publication by the end of July.

Post meeting note: The PE subgroup report is still in preparation and will be considered at the next meeting.

Action 3.4 Prof.Levy to invite Dr Benford and Prof. Boobis to present on the EFSA report at the next meeting.

Action 3.5 PE subgroup to organise a day's session to deal with the background science established so far.

Action 3.6 PE subgroup to establish the way the risk assessment process will be taken forward.

Action 3.7 The Group to consider names of those who could contribute constructively to the risk assessment process should the expansion of the sub group be agreed.

Action 3.8 PE subgroup to establish how the first meeting of the extended PE subgroup will be organised – how a day's session might be organised to cover the background science to give everyone an insight into aspects affecting human health.

Three actions were carried over from the previous meeting:

Action 2.6 John Batley to circulate a proposal with draft terms of reference for his proposed sub group.

Action 2.7 Defra to pull together all the regulations, guidelines and Directives which are relevant to the Lead Ammunition Group.

Action 2.12 TA to amend Gantt chart for sign off at next meeting

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[1] Post meeting note – FSA have provided the following:

- There are no legal limits for lead in game meat. Maximum levels (MLs) for heavy metals in certain foods are established by EC Regulation 1881/2006 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_364/l_36420061220en00050024.pdf). This includes MLs for lead in meat of bovine animals, sheep, pig and poultry but does not include game meat.
- Maximum levels are often set for foodstuffs which contribute significantly to the general dietary exposure. It is not possible to set maximum levels for all foodstuffs. When MLs are set for metals in various foodstuffs, they are set based on risk assessments which in turn are based on exposure assessments from consumption data. It is not practical to set MLs for heavy metals for each foodstuff.
- When determining whether the amount of lead (or any contaminant) in a particular foodstuff (that does not have an ML) is acceptable, General Food Law would be applied. This is EC Regulation No 178/2002 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:031:0001:0024:EN:PDF). We will carry out risk assessments and consider exposure to lead as a result of consuming that particular food in addition to the rest of the diet.
- Regulation No 178/2002 provides that food shall not be placed on the market if it is unsafe (i.e. injurious to health or unfit for human consumption). The supplier should be taking steps to ensure that the levels of lead in game meat are as low as possible.
- Regulation (EEC) No 315/93 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31993R0315:EN:HTML) stipulates that food containing a contaminant in an amount which is unacceptable from the public health viewpoint shall not be placed on the market.