

Minutes of the 15th Lead Ammunition Group meeting/telecon – 29th September 2015

WWT, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire (15.30-16.30)

Attendees

Prof. Rhys Green - (RSPB)
Mr. John Kilner - (Defra)
Dr. James Kirkwood - (Universities Federation for Animal Welfare)(retired)
Prof. Len Levy - (Institute of Environment and Health)
Dr. Debbie Pain - (WWT)
Mr. Gavin Shears - (Food Standards Agency, FSA)
Mr. John Swift (Chair)

Secretariat

Dr. Ruth Cromie (WWT)

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 Apologies were received from Kate Fouracre (Defra), Richard Brand-Hardy (Defra) and Sarah Hardy (FSA).

2. Minutes of the 14th meeting on 13th August 2015

2.1 There were no comments made on the published minutes of the 14th meeting.

2.2 Matters arising from those minutes:

Action Point 12.2 To request FSA to review their guidance on consumption of game and venison in the light of the LAG risk assessments.

Action carried forward until FSA have considered the LAG report.

Action Point 13.3 Prof. Len Levy to contact Public Health England to help identify most appropriate contacts (in relation to FSA communication experts). It was felt that this was a task for FSA once the report had been accepted, rather than the LAG, but would be carried forward.

Action Point 13.6 Prof. Len Levy to write short note to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in support of the even-handed role played by the Chair.

This had been delayed due to awaiting sight of a report submitted to Defra and FSA outside of the LAG process. The action was now seen as unnecessary but instead there was a request to record, herewith, a minute from the remaining members of the LAG in support of the Chair's even-handed role.

Action Point 14.1 Post recent ministerial correspondence on the LAG website.

Completed.

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Action Point 14.2 Richard Brand-Hardy to inform the Chair of key milestones of the peer review process e.g. when funding has been secured, when peer reviewers selected etc.

On agenda (Item 4).

Action Point 14.3 All to make LAG members aware of relevant information and decide on value of posting on the LAG website on a case by case basis.

None received to date.

Action Point 14.4 Chair to find suitable meeting date for late September.

Completed.

3. To receive and discuss Chairman's report

3.1 Nothing substantive to report.

4. To receive a report from Defra on progress for independent peer review of LAG report.

4.1 Mr. John Kilner provided an update: funding for the peer review process had been identified and thinking had gone into which individuals/committees might be best placed to take on the various aspects of peer review. There were two main possible options:

1. Have the report reviewed by the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC): discussions were being undertaken with its secretariat to ensure that the content of the report fell within the HSAC remit.
2. Reconsider whether peer review was needed given the reviewing undertaken to date (as discussed at previous meeting).

This choice would be a ministerial decision, and they would decide following return from recess on 12th October.

4.2 Mr. Gavin Shears confirmed that the human health aspects of the report (including the risk assessments) had already been reviewed by the Committee on Toxicology (COT) and he reported that they had been broadly content with both the approach taken and the conclusions drawn. Len Levy acknowledged that, given the rigour of their standards, this was welcome and wondered if accompanying comments from COT were available. As COT comments for the LAG report were dealt with as "reserved business", it would need to be checked as to whether these could be made available when appropriate.

Gavin Shears confirmed that current FSA consumer advice will be reviewed once the LAG report has been finally considered/accepted.

4.3 Given that the human health aspects had been reviewed, John Kilner confirmed that should there be a ministerial request for peer review of the LAG report, this would be just restricted to the aspects not already reviewed by COT.

4.4 A slight disappointment was noted from some that peer review might now not happen given that LAG was confident that the approach and conclusions were robust.

There was some discussion as to whether LAG could submit the report independently to the HSAC if Defra chose not to. It was not known if this was possible i.e. within the remit of HSAC and John Kilner would need to check.

Action Point 15.1 John Kilner to determine if submission of the LAG report directly from LAG would be appropriate or possible.

4.5 Dr. Debbie Pain and Prof. Rhys Green explained that up to date analyses had been undertaken on both human and wildlife health risks as part of two papers within the Oxford Lead Symposium proceedings. These new figures are based on new evidence/analyses not available or not conducted for the LAG risk assessments which were completed some time (several years) ago. The human health paper contains new data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey and more precise estimates of numbers of people within different groups at health risks, plus confidence intervals – Defra had previously commented that confidence intervals would be valuable –and they are presented in this recent (Oxford Lead Symposium) paper. When asked if it would be valuable to see these new analyses (i.e. as soon as proofs were ready after the Proceedings peer review process) both John Kilner and Gavin Shears said they would be grateful to receive these.

Action Point 15.2 Debbie Pain/Rhys Green to contact the Oxford Lead Symposium convenor and ask if they can provide copies of the relevant papers on risks to UK wildlife and human health to Defra and FSA as soon as proofs are available.

4.6 A request was made for Defra/FSA to keep the LAG updated with developments on consideration of the LAG report.

Action Point 15.3 Defra/FSA to inform LAG of progress on consideration of LAG report.

5. LAG website: to review visitor data

5.1 It was reported that the website appeared to be serving its purpose and there had been an additional >2000 views since the last report (in mid-August) and a higher proportion of returning viewers. There had been an obvious spike of activity surrounding the recent LAG-related articles in the shooting press.

6. To exchange information on other related developments (future meetings and reports etc).

6.1 There was discussion about the forthcoming Association of European Manufacturers of Sporting Ammunition (AFEMS) and the World Forum on Shooting Activities symposium on "The sustainable use of lead ammunition in hunting and sports shooting: facts and emotions" meeting in Brussels on 20th October. There was an enquiry as to whether anyone on LAG had been invited (invitation only event) – none had.

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6.2 The Oxford Lead Symposium proceedings were likely to be published within the next few weeks or small number of months.

6.3 Debbie Pain reported that she would soon be attending a meeting with representatives from the European Commission (DG Environment), BirdLife and FACE to discuss poisoning from ammunition sources.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 None.

8. Date of next meeting

8.1 Action Point 15.4 Chair to find suitable meeting date for early/mid-November.

9. Action points carried forward

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Action Point 15.2 Debbie Pain/Rhys Green to provide copies of the papers on risks to UK wildlife and human health to Defra and FSA when they are available.

Action Point 15.3 Defra/FSA to inform LAG of progress on consideration of LAG report.

Action Point 15.4 Chair to find suitable meeting date for mid-November.