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Guide to the National Control Programme for *Salmonella* in broiler flocks



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This guidance sets out the main sampling requirements of the *Salmonella* National Control Programme (NCP) in broiler flocks in the UK and the measures which will be taken when a flock is positive for *Salmonella*. The guidance also applies to the equivalent legislation in Devolved Administrations.

This guidance should not be read in isolation: specific advice will be available from your veterinarian and government officials on the NCP. Advice is also available from Defra and the VLA to all farmers on action shown to be effective in controlling *Salmonella*: rodent control, biosecurity, cleansing and disinfection.

What is the National Control Programme for Broiler Flocks?

In brief, the National Control Programme (NCP) for *Salmonella* in broiler flocks of domestic fowl is a three year programme to reduce/control the prevalence of *Salmonella* in broiler flocks across all EU Member States to a target agreed by all Member States and the EU Commission. It officially commenced in 2009.

The NCP was written in partnership with representatives from the poultry industry. It sets out the new statutory requirements for the monitoring and control of *Salmonella* contained in EU Regulations (EC) No 2160/2003 and (EC) No 646/2007. These Regulations are intended to ensure that, for the protection of human health, coherent action to reduce *Salmonella* serotypes considered to be of particular human health significance (*Salmonella* Enteritidis and Typhimurium) is taken across the Community. The broiler NCP is one of a series of NCPs being implemented in the poultry and pig sectors throughout the EU.

Introduction

The NCP for broilers, like the NCPs for breeders and layers, sets out the monitoring and controls producers must follow to reduce and/or control the prevalence of *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) and *Salmonella* Typhimurium (ST) to 1% or less by 31 December 2011.

The NCP requires specific control measures following the detection of *Salmonella* Enteritidis or *Salmonella* Typhimurium to protect human health. These are intended to help prepare producers for compliance with the microbiological criteria for *Salmonella* absence in fresh poultry meat (as required by Zoonoses Regulation 2160/2003).

Part I – So what do I have to do?

Does the NCP apply to all broiler flock holdings?

The requirements of the NCP apply to **all** operators with just two exceptions:

- Holdings with **capacity of less than 2000 chickens present at any one time**, where the operator supplies small quantities **direct to the consumer** (i.e. farm gate sales) or via **local¹ retailers** which only supply the final consumer (essentially householders).
- Where all production is for private domestic use only (i.e. the meat is not being sold on the market).

Do I need to register for the NCP?

Yes – unless you are already registered under The Great Britain Poultry Register (GBPR) and an equivalent register in Northern Ireland. This register details the locations and numbers of all poultry for the purposes of control of avian influenza and *Salmonella*. If you are not registered with the GBPR, then you will be required to register. Further information on registration is available from your local Animal Health Office or on Defra-web at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/vetsurveillance/poultry/index.htm>

How does the NCP define a flock?

The NCP defines a flock as a single group or multiple groups of chickens which share the same production unit (i.e. using the same air-space or range area). Where housing systems are not typical, the situation is likely to be assessed on a case by case basis. Multiple groups of chickens which have 'beak-to-beak' contact (inside or outside the house) are likely to be treated as a *single flock*.

1 **Local:** current Food Standards Agency guidance defines local as the supply of food of animal origin within the supplying establishment's own county plus the greater of either the neighbouring county or counties or 50 km/30 miles from the boundary of the supplying establishment's county.

Part I – So what do I have to do?

Do I have to keep records of movements and of birds?

Yes, you will need to record the following for each flock when birds are moved on to or off a holding:

- (a) the date of the movement;
- (b) whether the movement was on to or off the holding;
- (c) the number of birds moved;
- (d) the age of the birds moved;
- (e) in the case of the movement of an entire flock, the identification of that flock, where there is more than one flock on the holding;
- (f) the identity of the building or group of buildings in, to or from which the birds were moved;
- (g) the address of the holding that they came from or the slaughter house/holding they were sent to.

Part I – So what do I have to do?

Do I have to keep records of testing and sampling?

Yes, if you have a broiler flock for which testing is obligatory.

Records must be kept for at least two years and be made available for inspection. Under the NCP, all producers may be audited at any time. It would be convenient to keep the records in a book in tabular form or, of course, they may be included in any computerised system you use. You will need to record:

- (a) the date on which the sample was taken;
- (b) where there is more than one flock on the holding, the identification of the flock (this is house name, month and year the flock was moved into the house) from which the sample was taken;
- (c) the age of the flock sampled;
- (d) the laboratory to which the sample was sent;
- (e) the date of intended slaughter.

When will these records be checked?

These can be checked during routine auditing visits. Records may also be checked after any positive result in any of the houses or during the collection of an official control sample.

Part II – What samples are required for *Salmonella* Testing?

What samples are required?

Production Stage	Type of sample
Operator sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FOR ALL FLOCKS: Two pairs of boot swabs (or hand drag swabs in small houses with less than 100 birds). TIMING: within the period of three weeks before the start of depopulation.
Official control sampling (see page 11 for further detail)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two pairs of boot swabs (or hand drag swabs) from one flock of broilers on 10% of holdings with more than 5,000 birds.• From all flocks on a holding after a flock has been detected positive for SE or ST.

Is there any flexibility under the NCP for holdings with good *Salmonella* control?

Yes – you can apply for a derogation not to sample all flocks on a holding under the following criteria:

- (i) an all in/all out system is used;
- (ii) the same management applies to all flocks;
- (iii) feed and water supply is common to all flocks;
- (iv) during one year and after at least six crops of flocks, samples were collected and tested for *Salmonella* according to the NCP on all flocks on the holding and no SE or ST was found in any of the samples;
- (v) Samples of all flocks on the holding of at least one crop were taken by the Competent Authority; and no SE or ST was found in any of the samples.

Part II – What samples are required for *Salmonella* Testing?

If all of these criteria are met, the Competent Authority may approve the derogation.

The application should be made to your local Animal Health Office.

Where can I obtain operator sampling equipment?

Approved laboratories will be able to provide advice on where to obtain sampling equipment (details of these are below).

The laboratory to which you are going to send the samples will be able to advise you on suitable containers for samples. In most cases, the laboratory or your vet will be able to supply sampling equipment.

How do I sample using boot swabs?

Equipment List

- Disposable over-boots;
- Gloves;
- Sealable bags or sample pots;
- Two pairs of boot swabs (mop caps);
- Potable water for moistening boot swabs. – clean potable water is suitable, but if there is any doubt as to its quality, use a new (previously unopened) bottle of drinking water without gas;
- Packing materials.

Prior to entering the house, ensure that all necessary equipment (gloves, overshoes, boot swabs, containers etc.) is assembled so as to prevent cross-contamination during or after sampling.

Part II – What samples are required for *Salmonella* Testing?

Take two pairs of boot swabs (or hand drag swabs) from each flock (house or separate biosecure section of the house). Ensure there can be no contamination of swabs prior to use and that they cannot come into contact with disinfectant (plastic over-boots should be put on after walking through disinfectant boot-dips, not before). If using plastic over-boots to go through foot dips, then put on a second pair over them before putting on the boot swabs. Contact of the swabs with disinfectant before or after sampling could result in a false positive result for antimicrobial residues/disinfectant residues and invalidate the sample. For the same reason – gloves used during sampling should not be treated with hand sanitiser.

The swabs should represent the whole area to which the birds have access. Divide the sampling area into two equal sectors for sampling – each pair of boot swabs must cover 50% of the house. If the house is internally subdivided into several pens, ensure all pens are represented in the sampling in a proportionate way. Walk with one pair of boot swabs in each sector of the house. Take a minimum of 100 paces per pair of boot swabs, ensuring that all parts of the sector are sampled, but NOT including any outdoor areas in the case of free-range birds.

On completion of sampling in each sector, carefully remove the boot swabs so as not to dislodge adherent material and invert them to retain material. The boot swabs can then be placed together in a suitable pot or sealable bag for dispatch to the laboratory. All swabs from each flock can be pooled into a single sample.

Where should these samples be sent?

Samples must be sent to a laboratory which is approved to carry out the necessary tests under the National Control Programme. A list of approved laboratories in Great Britain is available from your local Animal Health Office and on the Defra website at <http://defraweb/animalh/diseases/zoonoses/ncp.htm>.

Part II – What samples are required for *Salmonella* Testing?

The samples should be sent to the laboratory on the day of collection (or within 25 hours of the sample being taken). Each sample from each flock should be labelled separately and should indicate the following:

- date the sample was taken;
- the identity of the flock sampled including:
 - House name or number;
 - Month the flock moved into the house;
 - Year the flock has moved into the house.
- age of the flock sampled;
- the name and address of the holding;
- the contact details of the person submitting the sample.

You should liaise with the laboratory on the details of dispatching the samples.

If I am unable to send the samples on the day of collection what do I do?

In exceptional circumstances, when samples cannot be sent within 25 hours of being taken, they must be kept at 4°C until they are sent to a laboratory. Samples must not be frozen. Samples **MUST** be submitted within 48 hours of being taken, otherwise they will not be suitable for testing and a repeat sample will have to be taken.

Part II – What samples are required for *Salmonella* Testing?

Will I receive the results of the tests for *Salmonella*?

Normally the laboratory will send the test results to the sender of the sample. If this is not the registered person, the laboratory must also forward a copy to the registered person. If a test proves positive for *Salmonella*, the person in charge of the laboratory must immediately report the result to the appropriate government official as required under the Zoonoses Order 1989. See Part III for further information on measures which will be taken in response to a positive sample.

Am I responsible for sampling and laboratory charges?

Owners are responsible for all expenses involved in the sampling and testing required under the NCP except in the case of some official samples.

What are Official Control Samples?

Official control samples are those which are collected and tested under the control of an authorised government official. These are collected to provide official verification that the UK target for the control of *Salmonella* in broiler flocks is being met and to confirm whether or not infection is present in other flocks on the site.

Part II – What samples are required for *Salmonella* Testing?

When are Official Control samples collected?

The NCP requires that these samples will be collected on the following occasions:

1. Annually from 10% of holdings with more than 5,000 birds.
2. From all other flocks on a holding after a positive result for SE or ST.
3. Flocks with unknown health status (i.e. where there is no evidence of operator sampling on the premises).
4. When applying for derogation not to sample all flocks on the holding.

Who is responsible for the collection of official control samples?

All of these samples will be collected under the control of the Competent Authority. It is expected that, in most circumstances, they will be collected by government officials.

Will I be charged for official control samples?

A charge will be made for the collection and testing of the official control sampling required to apply for a derogation. *(It is possible that charges may also be made for the other official sampling occasions listed above.)*

Part III – What happens if *Salmonella* is detected?

My flock has returned a positive operator sample – what happens next?

If *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) or *Salmonella* Typhimurium (ST) is detected in an operator sample, you should be immediately informed by the testing laboratory.

Official samples will be collected by the Competent Authority from the next crop in the affected house as well as from all other flocks on the holding. If any of these samples are positive, a restriction notice will be served on the holding under the Zoonoses Order, requiring supervised cleansing and disinfection and further sampling.

If any of the post cleansing and disinfection samples return a positive result for SE or ST, it will only be possible to move the next flock off the holding under licence to a slaughter house that has been informed of the flock's status and advised to make arrangements to avoid cross-contamination. A further official sample will be collected from all flocks in the next crop.

A government veterinarian may visit your holding to provide advice on *Salmonella* control. The steps are set out in further detail in annex I.

What happens if my flock returns a positive result from an official control sample?

If SE or ST is detected in an official control sample, the same measures explained above will be taken.

Part III – What happens if *Salmonella* is detected?

Who should I inform about this?

When the laboratory result is available before the birds are sent for slaughter, it should be recorded as Food Chain Information and be made available to the processor.

What happens to the meat from a positive flock?

At the present time, poultry meat from a positive flock can be sold for human consumption. However, the Hygiene Legislation requires producers to inform processors of the results of any *Salmonella* testing as food chain information. Processors knowingly accepting a flock that has tested positive for *Salmonella* must take steps to control the hazard and minimise any risk of cross contamination to birds from negative flocks.

What help is available?

Free advice and assistance will be available from the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) (who may visit your holding) and Animal Health on measures which can be taken to control SE or ST on the site. Defra has also published guidance on the control of *Salmonella* on-farm which is available on Defra-web:

www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/zoonoses/salmonella-cop.htm

You are also advised to contact your local veterinary surgeon for help and advice.

Further information

Where can I get further information and application forms?

For further information about the requirements of the legislation, and to obtain an application form for registration, please see the Defra website at **www.defra.gov.uk/animalh**

You can also contact the local Animal Health Office or Divisional Veterinary Office – whose address and telephone number can be found at **www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth/** or **www.dardni.gov.uk**

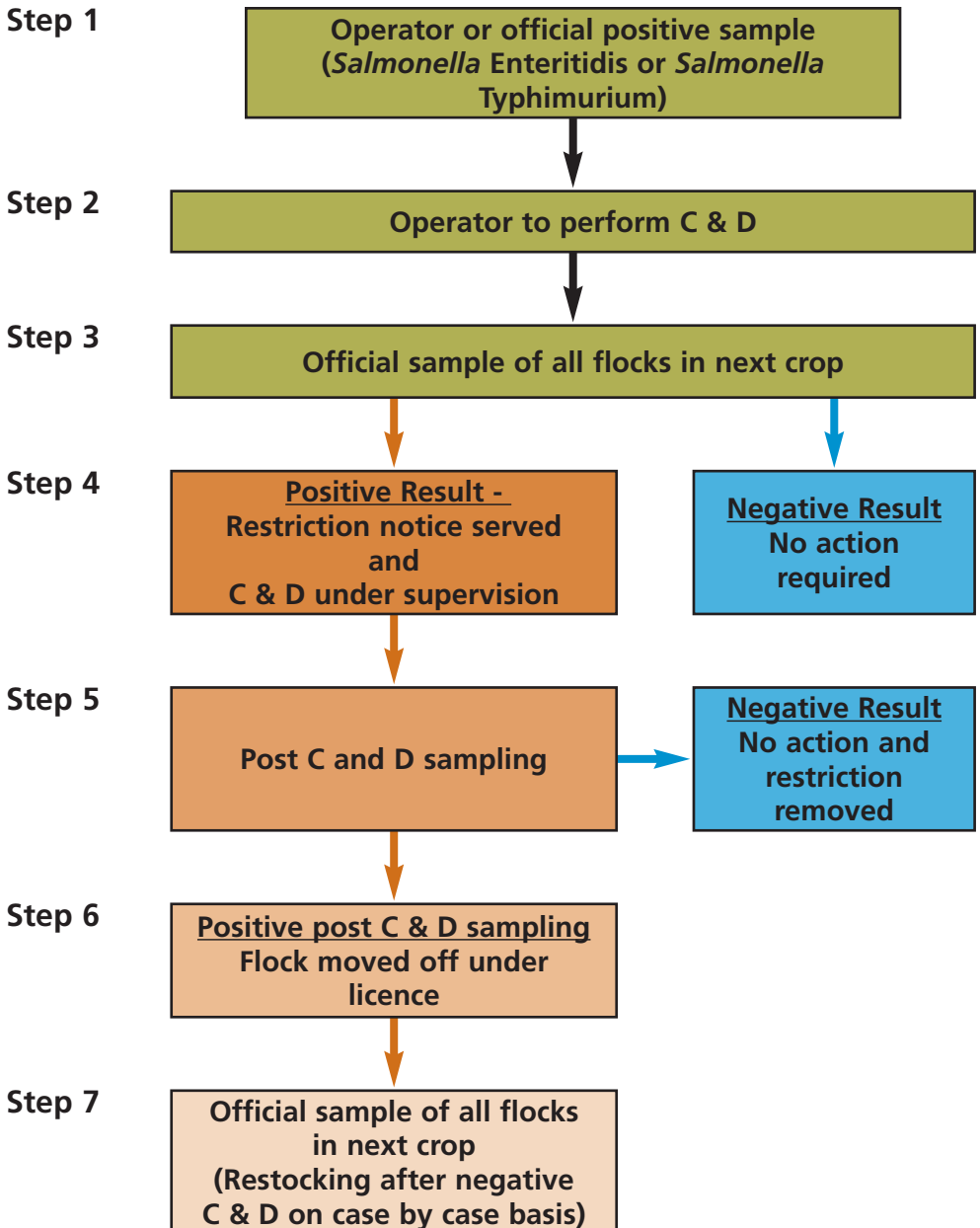
Copies of the relevant legislation can be purchased from HMSO/TSO online bookshop: **www.opsi.gov.uk/**

Further copies of this leaflet are available free of charge from: Defra Publications, Admail 6000, London SW1 A 2XX or by calling 08459 556000.

A Code of Practice for the prevention and control of *Salmonella* in chickens reared for meat on farm is also available, free of charge, from Defra Publications.

Further information on how to collect samples can be found at the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk/animalh

If an operator sample is positive, the following steps will take place.



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