

Ref: A-01-02

21 February 2001

To:

- EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS
- ALL MILAB APPROVED LABORATORIES
- AGRIQUALITY PROFICIENCY PROGRAMMES
- INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION NEW ZEALAND

MILAB SCHEME – EXPERT PANEL MEETING/TELECONFERENCE

At the meeting in November 2000, and subsequent teleconference in January 2001, the following issues were discussed:

1. *MIRINZ 873 (3rd Edition)*

The changes in Edition 3 and their impact on MILAB were reviewed. Issues noted included:

a) Potable Water

- The European Commission has updated its requirements for total coliforms and *E. coli*, and for *C. perfringens* but change in New Zealand awaits further discussion on the Veterinary Agreement,
- The proposed tests for the European Commission requirements will be included in the MILAB - Standard Issue 2, for laboratory information only. However, if and when approved, a transition period for implementation will be specified.

Please note: At present Potable Water analysis requirements **have not changed**.

b) Meat Microbiology

- There were no significant changes for tests 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3,
- For *Salmonella*, the Tecra method has been accepted as it has new AOAC approval. However it cannot be used where specific tests are specified for particular markets.

Please note that:

- “Serobact” has been removed as it is not AOAC approved,
- the test for *L monocytogenes* requires incubation at 35°C (reminder only),
- the test for *Enterobacteriaceae* has a new incubation temperature,
- the tests for *E coli* O157:H7 refer to the methods introduced by MISC (reminder only).

The Expert Panel agreed that:

- The methods described in MIRINZ 873 Edition 3 may be used as from 1 December 2000. The methods described in MIRINZ 873 Edition 2 may continue to be used until 1 December 2001,
- From 1 December 2001 only the methods described in MIRINZ 873, Edition 3 shall be used. Partial implementation is unacceptable.
- On implementation of MIRINZ 873, Edition 3, the quality assurance procedures specified in Chapter 2 shall be used. Compliance with Chapter 2 was discussed in more detail during the January teleconference. MILAB will specify shortly which clauses are mandatory and which are optional (for guidance only).

Please note: Prior to a routine assessment, IANZ will require written confirmation by the laboratory manager and a MAF Verification Agency Technical Supervisor that the test methodology specified by MIRINZ 873, 3rd Edition has been implemented. IANZ will provide a standard letter to this end.

2. *Signatories*

a) ILCP participation

The Expert Panel agreed that the section 8.6 of the MILAB Standard - Issue 1, needs to be rewritten to provide more discretion to Assessors with regard to the assessments of a signatory competency and requirement for participation in ILCPs. This means that:

- The requirement for the three months experience in the laboratory may be reduced depending on the findings of the assessment by the Assessment Body,
- The Assessment Body may require a nominee to demonstrate required proficiency standard in a designated ILCP for the tests for which signatory approval is sought,
- The Assessment Body may grant derogation based on previous experience and signatory status.

Signatories within an IANZ Accredited Laboratory shall be required to demonstrate that they have:

- A knowledge of the all requirements of the MILAB Scheme,
- Access to the methods required by MILAB Scheme,
- Proficiency in these methods, as demonstrated to the Assessment Body in the course of an assessment and/or by demonstrating required proficiency standard in a designated ILCP for the tests for which signatory approval is sought

b) Accreditation under the Animal Products Act 1999

The Administrator informed the Expert Panel that in the near future all laboratory signatories will have to be accredited under the Animal Products Act 1999. That means that a signatory will have a statutory obligation to comply with the performance standards as specified in the MILAB Scheme and the duties imposed on accredited persons under section 107 of the APA 1999 (<http://rangi.knowledge-basket.co.nz/gpacts/public/text/1999/an/093.html>).

3. *Inter Laboratory Comparison Programmes*

The Expert Panel agreed that cultures used should be well characterised reference strains from an internationally recognised source and that the output requirements should include stability for ILCP purposes and suitability from the point of view of morphology, reactions, growth and longer term stability

4. *Trichinella spp. testing*

The Expert Panel agreed that *Trichinella* testing (for some overseas markets and domestic) be included in the Scheme and be added to the list of official methods.

5. *NMD*

a) Venison and Poultry

The Expert Panel has been informed that venison and poultry NMD programmes are under development. When implemented, the laboratories handling this work will be brought into the MILAB System. This will require an expansion of Expert Panel membership.

b) Samples: transportation time, randomness of sampling

The Expert Panel has been informed that the flexibility required is already in the programme. However, premises and laboratories must be able to demonstrate (documented) that they have actively investigated all means possible to meet the requirements, and that a practical and reasonable solution is not available.

6. *Subcontracting*

The Expert Panel agreed that:

- Sub-contracting remains allowable under the MILAB Scheme,
- Where a MILAB Approved laboratory sub-contracts infrequently, the primary laboratory maintains responsibility for the trainers and samplers, provided the primary laboratory is approved for the sub-contracted tests,
- Where a MILAB Approved laboratory sub-contracts analyses to another MILAB Approved laboratory for normal operation, the contracted laboratory must take responsibility for the trainers and samplers, i.e. the analyses and sample collection are under the control of the one sub-contracted laboratory. **Note:** MAF Food has stated that in this case, results for the NMD must be supplied in total by the premises or the contracted MILAB Approved laboratory. Results will not be accepted from the primary laboratory,
- Where the primary laboratory is not MILAB Approved for a test, it cannot take responsibility for trainers and sampling, as it does not have a registered programme. Therefore, the contracted MILAB Approved laboratory must take responsibility for the trainers and samplers. The premises cannot therefore be “anonymous” to the contracted laboratory. **Note:** MAF Food has stated that in this case, results for the NMD must be supplied in total by the premises or the contracted MILAB Approved laboratory. Results will not be accepted from a non-MILAB Approved laboratory.

7. ***MILAB Standard – Issue 2***

The MILAB Standard – Issue 2, which incorporates all the agreed outcomes, will be issued by mid March 2001.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mirzet Sabirovic
MILAB Administrator

Cc: Tony Zohrab, Director Animal Products
Phil Ward, Technical Policy Manager
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