GOOD NEEDLE PRACTICE – EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY

Suspected broken needles in livestock are rare, however, imagine the food safety risk and subsequent harm to the industry’s reputation if a broken needle ended up in a meat product.

As a producer, it is very important to take steps to prevent needles from breaking, and to know what to do if a broken needle is suspected. As part of Red Tractor’s standards farmers must have a broken needle policy within their health plan; an example of a broken needle policy can be found on the Red Tractor website here.

Good needle practice is a crucial tool for farmers in maximising the value of their product after slaughter. Incorrect injections can lead to the formation of lesions, which subsequently means farmers are financially worse off as the lesion and surrounding tissue must be trimmed out by the abattoir before being weighed.

Kate Cross, Red Tractor Dairy and Beef and Lamb Technical Manager said “Producers could be losing money simply by not injecting in the correct place. Injections should be carried out in the neck of the animal, where the lower value cuts are located, as well as in a dry and clean area”

She added “It’s also best practice to replace needles as frequently as possible to reduce the risk of abscesses forming”

While the industry has become increasingly aware of the costs of trimming associated with injection-site blemishes the impact doesn’t stop there. The quality of the meat surrounding an intramuscular injection site is also impacted by the injection, and, in turn the eating experience for consumers could be compromised.

David Lindards, Technical Operations Director at the British Meat Processors Association said “The economic losses to the beef industry from poor needle practices extend from producer through to processor. Not only do abscesses lead to wasteful trimming and even partial rejection of the carcase, which in turn reduces saleability, but also the meat surrounding the lesion is often very tough”

He added “It is an all too common experience to be eating a good steak and all of a sudden come to a bite that’s tough. We can’t afford to have injection-site blemishes affect the beef eating experience. It is in everyone’s best interest to ensure the consumer has a positive experience when they purchase a high value product such as beef, after all everyone wants them to be repeat customers”

For guidance on veterinary medicine use including guidance on how to inject visit www.nadis.org.uk and/or the AHDB Better Returns Manual, Using Medicines Correctly For Better Returns.