

To: District Council CEHOs
Group CEHOs

CC: NIFLG
CIEH
LACORS
DARD

Ref: ENF/NI/08/028

10th June 2008

Dear Colleague

Labelling of minced meat, meat preparations and meat products intended to be eaten cooked with cooking instructions

We have been made aware of consumer concerns that minced meat offered for sale (both in packs and loose) to the final consumer may not be labelled with cooking instructions as clearly as they might be. The purpose of this letter is to ask appropriate officials to check, as part of their normal enforcement duties in food businesses, that manufacturers of minced meat, meat preparations and meat products intended to be eaten cooked are correctly applying the required labelling to their product.

Current advice from the Agency is that food business operators responsible for the production and sale of minced meat, meat preparations and meat products intended to be cooked before consumption must comply with the specific requirements to label products placed on the market with cooking information. Proper cooking will ensure that pathogenic bacteria that may be present are destroyed.

Article 6 of Regulation (EC) 2073/2005, as amended, on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs, requires minced meat, meat preparations and meat products (of all species set down in Annex I of that Regulation) intended to be eaten cooked to be clearly labelled by the manufacturer to inform the consumer of the need for thorough cooking prior to consumption. The Agency has taken advice from the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food who recommends that manufacturers give clear cooking instructions including oven temperatures and times. Symbols should only be used in conjunction with appropriate wording. There is more information in the Guide to Food Hygiene and Other Regulations for the UK Meat Industry; a link to this guidance is at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mig16aug07.pdf> (page 524 refers).



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In the case of food to be delivered to the ultimate consumer or catering establishment, The Food Labelling Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 (as amended) require that instructions for its use should be provided if it would be difficult to make appropriate use of the food in the absence of such instruction; cooking instructions could be included in this.

Regarding the sale of loose mince, the Agency recommends that best practice would be to have cooking instructions on a label attached to the packaging; alternatively retailers selling loose products, including minced meat, meat preparations and/or meat products, where no automatic labelling is available may prefer to have a label or sign displayed prominently at the point of sale to indicate this information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joy Cresswell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

JOY CRESSWELL
Meat Hygiene & Imported Food Unit