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MEAT HYGIENE

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to bring together the latest experience in the safe processing of meat from producer to consumer. While much of the monograph comprises the contributions and discussions at a WHO|FAO Seminar on Meat Hygiene held in Copenhagen in February 1954, it is not intended as a record of that meeting. The original contributions have, where necessary, been expanded or brought up to date; several new articles have been contributed; appropriate illustrations have been widely sought; and much detail—on laboratory techniques for the detection of meat-borne diseases, and on current practice in meat processing in various countries—has been incorporated in annexes. In its present form, this material should give a fairly rounded picture of the public-health aspects of the processes involved in the preparation, inspection, and marketing of meat and its products.

Since meat is a perishable commodity and its poor handling daily exacts a large public-health and economic toll, there can be no room for complacency over problems of meat hygiene, either in under-developed or in advanced countries. Nations can ill afford the disruption of activities in the home and community caused by meat-borne diseases, not to mention the formidable economic wastage and nutritional losses to the population of two fundamental needs—protein and fat.

The primary purpose of good meat-hygiene practice is, of course, to prevent transmission of disease to man and to provide a safe, wholesome product for his consumption. Thus, meat hygiene is essentially a public-health function. The secondary aims, lying rather in the economic sphere, include reduction of losses in meat and its by-products and prevention of disease transmission to other domestic animals. These are matters of concern chiefly to trade, food, and agricultural authorities.

In many countries the division of responsibility for meat-hygiene supervision among government departments is not clear-cut. Although no standard or uniform pattern exists, it is readily apparent that the effective operation of a meat-hygiene service must be based on close working relationships between the triad of medical, veterinary, and sanitary-engineering disciplines. Since meat hygiene is essentially a public-health function, and the veterinarian

is usually best trained and equipped to deal with diseases transmissible through meat, some health authorities have found it advantageous to include a veterinary public-health branch in their services, to cover meat-hygiene needs as well as other responsibilities such as zoonoses. A closer co-ordination of the activities and interests of groups concerned with meat hygiene has thus been achieved.

This monograph is not intended to serve as a guide or to train those responsible for supervising the soundness of meat from the producer to the consumer ; texts of this nature are already available—for example, Die Ausführung der tierärztlichen Fleischuntersuchung, by F. Schönberg and O. Zietzschmann, H. Thornton's Textbook of meat inspection, and A. R. Miller's Meat hygiene. Its aim is, rather, to illuminate recent advances and problems in diverse aspects of this wide subject for the benefit of the responsible authorities in public health and in veterinary science.
