

## **Urgent advice 03-2018: Risk assessment of the use of meat coming from sticking wounds in the production of minced meat, of the conservation of frozen meat and of the consumption of cattle tails which were not subject to post-mortem inspection**

### **Summary**

#### **Terms of reference**

The Scientific Committee is asked to evaluate urgently the following questions:

1. What is the food safety risk of minced meat produced with tissues coming from the sticking (bleeding) wound?
2. What is the food safety risk in case of (extended) storage of frozen meat?
3. What is the food safety risk in case of consumption of cattle tails (oxtail) which were not subject to (post-mortem) meat inspection?

#### **Methodology**

This risk assessment was performed urgently based on expert opinion and on available data from scientific literature. A systematic literature review and an uncertainty analysis could not be conducted given the limited timeframe.

#### **Result**

Meat obtained during trimming of the sticking wound is unfit for human consumption (Regulation (EC) N° 854/2004) because this meat is potentially contaminated with bacteria from the environment, the skin or the sticking knife.

The microbiological quality of meat does not evolve once frozen. If the microbiological quality of the meat was not in conformity with the standards before freezing, which might be the case if it contains category 3 animal by-products, then the risk in case of consumption of this meat remains after thawing.

Lesions, which can form a risk for food safety (injection sites, abscesses...), can occur at the tail base. If the cattle tails were not subject to post-mortem inspection before being removed, it is not possible to guarantee their fitness for human consumption.

#### **Conclusion**

There is an increased risk for food safety in case of consumption of minced meat containing meat that is obtained during trimming of the sticking wounds.

If the microbiological quality of the original product was in conformity with the standards and good practices during the entire freezing period were respected, there is no microbiological risk in terms of food safety of meat that has been frozen for several years. If the microbiological quality of the frozen meat was not in conformity with the standards, which might be the case if it contains category 3 animal by-products, the risk in case of consumption of this meat remains after thawing.

It cannot be guaranteed that cattle tails which were not subject to post-mortem inspection, are fit for human consumption.

The full text is available on this website in Dutch and in French.