

Alert on bugs in poultry

Food poisoning increase

Suellen Hinde

CONCERN about the increasing number of food poisoning cases caused by chicken meat has forced the development of a new production and processing standard for the poultry industry.

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand said the agency had identified a need to address the rise in cases of campylobacter and salmonella poisoning from chickens throughout Australia.

The food watchdog is also worried that the level of antibiotics used in the poultry industry could be making the bacteria resistant to treatment.

The new standard for poultry meat will set regulations to ensure that strict food safety controls cover the entire poultry meat industry, from farm to fork.

Campylobacter is the most common cause of food poisoning and is on the increase. Epidemiology continues to implicate chickens as the most likely source.

There were almost 18,000 campylobacter cases confirmed in Australia last year, compared with 14,750 in 2002. There have been nearly 8000 cases already this year.

But the figures are con-

sidered to be below the true number of infections because many people do not report food poisoning to their doctor.

The bacteria was one of the hot topics at the World Poultry Congress in Brisbane last week.

Industry and food experts agree it is impossible to eliminate the bacteria from chicken meat. But they are trying to find strategies to reduce it.

Queensland Department of Primary Industries scientist Jillian Templeton presented a paper on strategies to reduce campylobacter on the farm.

Ms Templeton said research suggested it was being "introduced" to the poultry shed from outside sources such as wild rodents.

"Manure contaminated with campylobacter can be walked into the shed from outside," she said. Well-maintained footbaths could prevent transmission of the organism.

FSANZ spokeswoman Lydia Buchtman said a survey of the industry would begin this year to determine the factors involved with contamination.

Australian Chicken Meat Federation executive director Dr Andreas Dubs said the industry was working with FSANZ to reduce the levels of bacteria in farming flocks.

Well-suited to a good cause



“Surfers have big hearts and a real connection with young people”

— Executive Mark Skinner

GET ON BOARD: Mark Skinner in his trademark wetsuit is always ready to give a helping hand to handicapped young people
 Picture: Drew Fitzgibbon

Lou Robson

IN HIS trademark tuxedo wetsuit and bright board shorts, Mark Skinner doesn't look like your average advertising executive.

The 54-year-old father of five spends hundreds of hours a year helping disadvantaged youths realise their dreams through The Board Meeting surfers charity organisation.

For his efforts, Mr Skinner has been nominated for a 2008 Pride of Australia Community Service Award.

Friend and fellow committee member Glen Corbet said Mr Skinner spent much of his spare time helping handicapped Queenslanders. Mr Corbet said the charity raised funds for local kids in need, particularly those who didn't fall into "normal funding categories".

"There are plenty of young kids out there who deserve funding but don't meet the criteria and fall through the cracks. When it comes to these kids, Mark always makes it work and he often foots the bill," Mr Corbet said.

Mr Skinner, who owns and runs Mark Skinner Advertising, joined the charity in 2004.

"Surfers have big hearts and a real connection with young people," Mr Skinner said. "Most of our members are over 30 and as old as 65 who get together to surf and raise money."

Sunshine Coast surfer Mike Belnap started the charity in 2003 to raise funds for his son and member of the Australian Down Syndrome swim team, Ty Belnap.

"After the first year, Mike was looking for help and he got in touch with me and I used my advertising contacts to pull it all together and that's what we did," Mr Skinner said.

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