



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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10th December 2020

Deputy Matt Carthy
TD
Dail Eireann
Kildare Street
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PQ Question 39099/20 :

To ask the Minister for Health the investigations that have been carried out with regard to outbreaks of Covid-19 in meat processing plants since August 2020; if he will provide all documentation associated with the investigations; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Carthy,

The above PQ has been sent to my Department for direct response to you on same.

Since August 1st 2020 and up to midnight on December 5th, there have been 35 outbreaks in meat/poultry processing plants (MPPs) notified. A total of 569 confirmed COVID-19 cases were linked to these 35 outbreaks.

A National Standing Oversight Committee (NSOC) is in place for oversight of COVID-19 outbreaks in specific workplaces including meat processing facilities and construction industry across the country. This is a multi-agency group including representation from HSE Public Health, HPSC, Occupational Health, Health and Safety authority, FSAI, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and others. This committee has oversight of the outbreaks in MPPs in Ireland.

Serial testing is offered to all MPPs on a regular basis. This is a preventative measure allowing identification of previously unknown positive cases among workers in MPPs. The workers can then be excluded from the workplace until non-infectious. Close contacts are also excluded and testing arranged as appropriate.

For individual MPPs where outbreaks occur, local outbreak control teams and work with the employers and employees of affected facilities to control and reduce the spread of infection. These teams are led by HSE Public Health departments and are also multi-agency, with representatives from environmental health, occupational health, and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and have had good engagement from and co-operation with plant management in responding to outbreaks. The local outbreak

control teams have arranged for the testing of symptomatic workers and the identification, tracing, and testing of contacts.

Interim guidance issued to all meat processing plants in Ireland on the 15th of May with recommendations around infection prevention and control measures to prevent cases and control outbreaks; steps to be taken when an individual case is suspected or confirmed; and additional steps to be taken when an outbreak has occurred.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Kelleher', with a horizontal line underneath.

DR. KEVIN KELLEHER, FFPHM, FFPHMI
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