

**29<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Deputy Thomas Gould  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ 30767/20 /20**

**Question: "To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a delay in supposed weekly Covid-19 testing in meat plants in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter".**

Dear Deputy Gould,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

We are not aware of any delay in testing in meat plants in Cork. Following the recommendation by NPHEP the Serial Testing programme at meat and food processing plants commenced on 21<sup>st</sup> August and is based on testing of asymptomatic staff. Testing nationally is operating within the agreed schedule which is once every four-weeks, which is informed with guidance from HSE Public Health. We are testing approximately 80 meat and food processing facilities nationwide. Serial testing is now established as a core component of the overall testing and contact tracing service, helping to detect asymptomatic individuals who may otherwise go undetected. This testing in Meat and Food Production facilities nationwide within the agreed criteria once every four weeks includes County Cork and has been taking place as scheduled.

Cycle 1 of the serial testing programme in Food Production facilities commenced on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> of August and concluded on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> of October. Cycle 1 of the serial testing programme of food production facilities carried out 29,735 tests with 121 of these tests detected. This represents a detected rate of 0.41%. Cycle 2 of serial testing of food production facilities has commenced on 12<sup>th</sup> of October for a four-week cycle. To date, Cycle 2 has carried out 10,198 tests with 78 detected cases. This represents a detected rate of 0.76%. The HSE is working closely with internal and external stakeholders to identify and implement improvements which can be built into the serial testing programme. This is unrelated to outbreak testing, it is serial testing of asymptomatic staff.

Where an outbreak occurs in a meat or food processing facility then outbreak mass testing will still occur. Public Health will be in touch locally in those situations. If a plant has confirmed cases there is a Public Health Assessment which determines what interventions are required and the subsequent frequency of testing. In all cases where an individual receives a detected result, the contact tracing process begins.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

*Niamh O'Beirne*

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**Niamh O'Beirne**  
**National Lead for Testing and Tracing**