



**12<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

Deputy Holly Cairns  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ 5241/21 “To ask the Minister for Health the number of reported Covid-19 cases found in meat plant workers between 1 January 2020 and 26 January 2021, inclusive; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Cairns,

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

I wish to advise that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 to 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 a total of 1,772 cases were detected in meat plant facilities. This is a positivity rate of 1.09%. Please note this includes both outbreak testing and serial testing.

The Serial Testing programme at meat and food processing plants commenced on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020 following the recommendation by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). This Serial Testing is operating nationally within an agreed schedule which is once every four-week and is informed with guidance from the HSE Public Health. We are testing approximately 85 meat and food processing facilities nationwide. Serial testing is now established as a core component of the overall testing and contact tracing service.

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,

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

