

## **Consultation on the revised Code of Good Agricultural Practice to protect water, soil and air quality**

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR GENERAL MICROBIOLOGY (SGM)

### **Introduction**

The Society for General Microbiology, founded in 1945, is an independent professional scientific body dedicated to promoting the 'art and science' of microbiology. It has now established itself as one of the two major societies in the world in its field, with some 5,500 members in the UK and abroad.

### **General Comments**

The document is valuable but is now too long. It could be shortened by setting out the recommendations, e.g., buffer strips, fenced-off streams, once and not repeatedly.

### **Specific Comments**

#### **Question 1: Do you agree with the consolidation of the Air, Soil and Water Codes into one overarching Code? Has anything been lost by this consolidation?**

Does it work? Yes and no. The idea is a good one but in practice the document is cumbersome and repetitive. It reads like an amalgamation of the three codes. I was expecting a central core of the common (generic) recommendations with the differences highlighted. I found that I read the same recommendations over and over.

#### **Question 2: Do you agree that the layout of integrated advice – i.e. by farming activity rather than by resource (air, soil and water) – is more helpful to land managers?**

It is spoilt by the amount of repetition. To my mind the themes are wrong. For example, in the consideration of managing nitrogen I would expect sections 2.3, 3.2, 4.3, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.8 to be dealt with together. As it stands the same information is frequently repeated.

There are also problems with the references. Some of the detail necessary for complying with the recommendations requires information from the references. Presumably all of this information is readily available, however, is a farmer expected to read the FSA draft document *Managing Farm Manures*

*for Food Safety: Guidelines for growers to reduce the risks of microbiological contamination of ready to eat crops?* The spread of references throughout the document, and their repetition, highlights the amalgamation of the documents.

**Question 3: You are also invited to comment on the detail of the attached version of the Code.**

The coverage is wide ranging.

The fragmentation of material under the chosen themes can be frustrating. For example, problems with ammonia are dealt with throughout the document but it is not until the third time (p 53) that the suggestion is made that slurry tanks could be covered to reduce losses.

I am surprised to see that the spreading of used sheep dip mixed with slurry onto land is recommended. It has been shown that sheep dip pesticides (including synthetic pyrethroids) inhibit protozoa and allow multiplication of enteropathogens in slurry (Semple, K.T., Hughes, P., Langdon, C. J. and Jones, K. (2000) Impact of synthetic pyrethroid-sheep dip on the microflora present in animal slurry. FEMS Microbiology Letters **190**, 255-260).

- Page 6. in the box salmonellae and campylobacters should not be in italics, and it should be *Cryptosporidium parvum* (not *parva*).
- Page 9 – 13 – ‘in this country’ should be omitted.  
17. In 2 – comma after however.
- Page 13 – unfamiliar with ‘grip blocking’.
- Page 24 – 16- I have experienced problems with aerosols of slurry after the operator blast the last of the slurry into the air to clean the valve!
- Page 26 – 28 – this section is rather poorly written.
- Page 59 – 42 – *C. parvum*
- Page 83 - 4- comma after however.
- Page 103 – 4 – unfamiliar with the term ‘poaching by livestock’.

## Sources

This evidence has been prepared on behalf of SGM by Dr Keith Jones (University of Lancaster).

## About the SGM

Society membership is largely from universities, research institutions, health and veterinary services, government bodies and industry. The Society has a strong international following, with 25% of membership coming from outside the UK from some 60 countries.

The Society is a 'broad church'; its members are active in a wide range of aspects of microbiology, including medical and veterinary fields, environmental, agricultural and plant microbiology, food, water and industrial microbiology. Many members have specialized expertise in fields allied to microbiology, including biochemistry, molecular biology and genetics. The Society's membership includes distinguished, internationally-recognised experts in almost all fields of microbiology.

Among its activities the Society publishes four high quality, widely-read research journals (*Microbiology*, *Journal of Medical Microbiology*, *Journal of General Virology* and *International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology*). It also publishes a highly respected quarterly magazine, *Microbiology Today*, of considerable general educational value. Each year the Society holds two major scientific meetings attended by up to 1500 microbiologists and covering a wide range of aspects of microbiology and virology research.

The governing Council of the SGM has a strong commitment to improving awareness of the critically important role of microbiology in many aspects of human health, wealth and welfare. It has in this connection recently initiated a 'Microbiology Awareness Campaign' aimed at providing information to the government, decision makers, education authorities, media and the public of the major contribution of microbiology to society.

An issue of major concern to the Society is the national shortage of experienced microbiologists, particularly in the field of clinical microbiology and in industry. To attempt to improve this situation long-term, the Society runs an active educational programme focused on encouraging the teaching of microbiology in university and college courses and in the school curriculum, including primary schools. Some 400 schools are corporate members of SGM.

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