

Safety first on pork – Doran

by David Perry

HOTELIERS and caterers across Scotland were urged last night to follow public authorities in the North-east – and buy only bacon and pork satisfying the standards met in Scotland.

The call came from Aberdeen Central Labour MP Frank Doran. A survey of public bodies in and around the city had shown that they insist on pigmeat from the United Kingdom or sources that comply with British standards.

Mr Doran established that Grampian University Hospitals receive supplies from Scottish Health Care. It in turn buys meat complying with the Scottish Pig Industry Initiative.

Humane

Aberdeen University's bacon and pork come from Campbell's Prime Meat. The latter's policy is to buy Scottish pigmeat. It also takes some Dutch bacon produced from sources applying the same rules on humane conditions and feed that apply to UK farmers.

The MP said Aberdeen City Council's suppliers have to abide by the SPI guidelines.

Mr Doran spoke as the crisis facing pig farmers in the North East deepened. He said: "These bodies are setting an example which I would like to see other areas of industry throughout Scotland follow."

"Other bulk purchasers like hotels and restaurants should do the same."

The farmers claim they are being undercut by cheap imports. Those come from countries in Europe where farmers do not follow the same humane practices required by law in Britain.

Protection standards adopted

CHILD protection in Aberdeen will have to meet formal standards introduced by the city council.

A document adopted by the council's policy and strategy earlier this week sets out the standards social work staff should meet in child-abuse cases.

Social work director Peter Cassidy said: "It is our responsibility to aim for the highest possible standards in this sensitive area of work and this best-practice document is intended to ensure that is achieved."

"Most of the elements of the document are already well-established practice in Aberdeen, but it is of great value in setting out a clear and consistent framework to allow good practice to take place."

The Press and Journal Roadshow

The Press and Journal has teamed up with Hermesetas to give readers the chance to "better" their lifestyle.

Now that we're all back at work after our New Year break, some of us are beginning to regret those Christmas and Millennium indulgences. It's time to start thinking of shifting those extra pounds and Hermesetas Sweeteners can help.

Hermesetas produces two types of sweeteners. Hermesetas Original: the classic saccharin sweetener which is available in tablet and liquid form, and Hermesetas Gold, a luxury sweetener available as a tablet or granulated product. Pop a tablet instead of sugar in your tea or coffee and sprinkle the granulated (which comes with an easy to use sprinkle top) on grapefruit, strawberries or your breakfast cereal. It's perfect to use in cooking and baking too.

To receive your free jar of Hermesetas Gold Granulated Sweetener come along to Superdrug. Bon Accord Centre, Aberdeen on Saturday, January 15, from 10am onwards and purchase the P&J

The Press and Journal

Epidemic will peak this week – minister

SCOTTISH Health Minister Susan Deacon said yesterday that Scotland's flu outbreak was expected to peak this week before falling off. The minister, however, continued to rise.

In a statement to the Scottish Parliament, the minister also promised lessons would be learned from the way in which the illness had been handled this year.

Her reiterated denial of complacency was immediately countered by Opposition critics.

Scottish National Party shadow health minister Kay Ullrich again accused the health minister of bungling.

"We've heard more complacency and still more self-congratulation," she said.

"And still no crisis: everybody's out of step but our Susan. Will she show

some humility and accept that the NHS is coping because the NHS staff are prepared to work back-to-back shifts and retired nurses are prepared to come in and help?"

Fly health spokeswoman Mary Seaton, told the Parliament she had written to the health minister 10 times since June asking what provisions had been made to cope with the winter outbreak.

Ms Deacon had said: "Our scientific and medical advisers expect the outbreak to peak during the course of the next week or so and begin to tail off thereafter."

In practical terms, whether classified as an epidemic or not, the consequences of this flu outbreak are the worst seen in Scotland for a decade. Despite the exceptional pressures, the NHS is coping.

"Let me assure you there is no complacency, either in this executive or in the NHS. We can always improve. The problems caused by illness and flu will not go away quickly. It will take some weeks for the outbreak to subside even if the number of new cases is now at its peak."

"But this is a situation to be managed, not a crisis to be manufactured," she declared.

30% rise on last New Year figure

FUNERAL bookings have risen by about 30% compared with the corresponding time last year as the flu outbreak takes its toll.

The crisis has seen funeral directors at their busiest for some time. Aberdeen Crematorium is working to capacity and families facing an extended wait for funerals.

Phil Edwards, spokesman for the Co-operative Funeral Service, which has branches across Scotland said: "Demand is high throughout Scotland." Flu was a contributing factor, adding to the backlog of funerals due to the holidays.

William Bruce, support services manager of Gordon and Watson, funeral directors, in Aberdeen's Rosebank Place, said it had been an exceptional few weeks.

He said: "We are trying our best to look after each family in the proper dignified manner. It has been the busiest two or three-week period for many a year."

Away from the city, funeral directors reported they had been busy but no more than expected. Eddie Wilson, of James McDonald Funeral Directors in Stonehaven, said: "This time of year does tend to bring a rise in numbers. I wouldn't say it has been any busier than expected. Certainly, the flu is taking its toll."

Alison Burgess, a partner in Burgess and Son in Ellon, said it had been busy but they were coping.

Aberdeen City Council said the crematorium at Hazlehead had been working to capacity. Families had to wait four to five days for a funeral. The normal period is two to three days.

Margaret Dow, vice president of the National Association of Allied Independent Funeral Directors, said that undertakers throughout Scotland were having to cope with an increased workload from flu deaths.

"Funeral directors are always busy in January, because of the Christmas and New Year backlog. I think we are busy because

of this backlog and also due to the flu.

There's a problem trying to get crematorium times at the moment. Crematoriums are working as hard as they can to deal with the numbers."

A spokesman said the problem was added to by the fact that burial grounds and crematorium were closed for five days over the festive period.

Other hospitals have had to bring in refrigerated units to use as flu-deaths rise. ARI had one on-site already.

The flu crisis has begun to abate on other fronts. Non-urgent medical operations are being resumed at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

postponed

Last week, the main acute hospital postponed non-urgent surgical admissions for a week and elective medical admissions for two weeks to cope with increasing admissions.

The hospital revealed last night that admissions had been steadily decreasing from a high of 61 last Tuesday to 35 yesterday.

A spokesman said the hospital felt confident to relax the temporary ban on non-urgent surgical cases. Operations would be performed again as quickly as possible.

The ban on elective medical admissions is still in place.

The hospital is still struggling with in-patient totals. A 12-bed intensive therapy unit is housing 17 patients with the help of two theatre recovery areas.

The flu epidemic claimed the life of a Callander man, it was revealed yesterday.

Retired bricklayer David Hoggan died suddenly at his home, Fairhill, in Main Street, Callander, on Sunday night.

Mr Hoggan, 77, had fallen ill with the virus three days earlier, despite trying desperately to avoid contact with anyone who might be carrying the bug.

Flu puts pressure on funeral services too



■ Rita Jappy celebrates her win with Ernest Duckett

Gordons just the ticket for Rita

by Michael Howie

A WOMAN whose brother served in the Gordon Highlanders for 20 years picked up £750 last night for winning the regimental museum's annual raffle.

Rita Jappy, of Alescent, Fraserburgh, was handed the cheque at the Aberdeen museum after the winning ticket was drawn last night – on her 40th birthday.

Mrs Jappy's brother, Edward Irvine, left the army last year after two decades with the Gordon Highlanders.

Part of that time was spent playing the trombone with the regiment's brass band. Mr Irvine now manages a branch of the car spare chain, Halford's, near Edinburgh.

Delighted Mrs Jappy, a classroom assistant at Leuchpots Primary School in Fraserburgh, was presented with her prize by Ernest Duckett and Ian Lockhart, of donors Tilney Investment Management.

She said she would spend some of the money on a new computer printer for the family.

Second prize of air tickets went to S. Murray, of Airyhall Drive, Aberdeen.

Chemical tanker in road alert

by Iain Grant

A CHEMICAL tanker was at the centre of a drama in Cairnness estate yesterday when it left the road en route to the atomic plant at Dounreay.

Emergency services raced to the scene after learning that the BOC tanker had gone into a ditch within a mile of the site on the

A836 Thurso-Reay road. Driver Owen Sheridan had been on a regular run with a load of liquid nitrogen from the company's base in Glasgow, bound for the defunct prototype fast reactor.

Mr Sheridan, in his mid-30s, from Cumnall, escaped shaken but unhurt after the lorry veered on to the soft nearside verge and into the ditch near the junction

with Achmarie – less than a mile from Dounreay.

Police and two fire tenders from Thurso were joined by members of the UK Constabulary at Dounreay after the accident was reported at 8.10am.

The lorry ended with its two nearside wheels embedded in the ditch, but with its load of liquid nitrogen intact.

MSPs told to retain poinding

ABOLISHING poindings and warrant sales will make it much more difficult to recover debt from benefit fraudsters and absent parents, the Scottish Parliament heard yesterday.

The Social Inclusion, Housing and Voluntary Sector Committee was hearing evidence about the Private Member's Bill on the Abolition of Poindings and Warrant Sales, being brought by Scottish Socialist Party MSP Tommy Sheridan.

Paul Gray, group director of the Department of Social Security (DSS), told the committee his department opposed lifting the threat to remove a person's property to recover debt.

Mr Gray said between April and October last year there were 25,000 cases in Scotland where it was necessary for the DSS to send a solicitor's letter to recover debt, and of those 9,000 did not pay up immediately.

They were then threatened with poinding and five did not pay, but in only one of these cases it was decided to proceed with the action.

Historian denies millions of Jews wiped out by Nazis

Cross-examined by Richard Rampton, QC, Mr Irving said: "I deny the gas chambers. I deny that the Germans killed millions in gas chambers." He also denied that the killings were carried out in purpose-built establishments.

He said that a million people were gassed in the gas chambers at Berkenau.

Asked if he accepted that the Nazis killed millions by violent means and not just by disease, overwork or starvation, Mr Irving said that he did.

He added: "Whether it was in the order of millions or not, I would hesitate to specify. Perhaps 1 million million. Less than 4 million."

He said that he had removed the word Holocaust from the second edition of his biography of Hitler because it was imprecise. "I found it misleading, offensive and untruthful because it's too vague," he said.

The hearing continues.

He was asked if he accepted or denied there was any systematic gassing of Jews in concentration camps, at Auschwitz or elsewhere.

Mr Irving said: "If we can leave out the word systematic I do not deny that there was some kind of gassing at Berkenau. It is highly likely that there was."

Man 'obsessed' by Dando is quizzed

AUSTRALIAN detectives have taken a statement from a man who is alleged to have been an obsessed fan of TV presenter Jill Dando and who left Britain within days of her murder, it was reported yesterday.

The 29-year-old businessman was traced to Sydney following a request from Scotland Yard officers investigating the shooting of 37-year-old Miss Dando on the doorstep of her home in Fulham, west London, last April.

A Scotland Yard spokesman confirmed that inquiries had been made by New South Wales Police but underlined that

there were no current plans for British detectives to travel to Australia in connection with the eight-month inquiry.

The man, who lived half a mile from Miss Dando's home in Gowan Avenue, Fulham, and is claimed to have developed an obsession with the TV golden girl, left Britain two weeks after the killing.

He is alleged to have plastered the walls of his flat with pictures of Miss Dando and sent a woman he befriended over the Internet sexually explicit e-mails detailing his fantasies about the presenter.

Detectives in Sydney were reported to

have spoken in recent days to the man, who is a British citizen, after tracing him through immigration records. He is thought to have arrived in Sydney in May.

New South Wales Police declined to comment on the details of their investigation, but Scotland Yard confirmed they had been in contact with their counterparts in Sydney.

The man, who was not arrested in Sydney, was reported to have sent his last e-mail about Miss Dando on April 26 last year – the day she was killed with a single shot to the head with a 9mm pistol.

In Brief

Songstress Pat moves up

ABERDEEN Choral Society veteran Pat McMahon has been appointed vice-president of the group. Miss McMahon enjoyed a long musical career, singing with the Aberdeen Annon Choir, performing in the Music Hall and, later, recording frequently for the BBC and making several appearances at the Edinburgh International Festival.

To mark the appointment, she will give a recital in the Cowdray Hall on January 29. Tickets are available from society members. The event will be followed by a buffet supper in Aberdeen Art Gallery.

Housebreaking

SIMON Gordon, 21, of 581 Great Northern Road, Aberdeen, was placed on probation for one year by Sheriff Graeme Buchanan, at Aberdeen Sheriff Court yesterday after he admitted breaking into a house in the city's Western Road last September, stealing various items, including a video recorder and jewellery.

Theft charge

DANIEL Kildea, 20, of 52A Bedford Road, Aberdeen, was yesterday placed on probation for six months after he admitted stealing a variety of items from a flat in the city's Sunnyside Road, and a separate charge of breaking into Kincorth Community Centre and stealing a car. He was also ordered to make good from the premises.

Nuisance

PETER Pratt, 24, of 14 Redness Terrace, Aberdeen, was yesterday fined £500 after he admitted making nuisance to his former girlfriend in the city, last year.

Dyce man fined

BARRY Fearn, 20, of 37 Parkhill Avenue, Dyce, was fined £400 and disqualified from driving for one year, after he admitted driving a motor car while over the legal alcohol limit in Howemoor Avenue, Dyce, on August 5 last year.

Death inquiry

THE death of a pensioner found in a hospital changing cubicle five hours after he was thought to have gone home was under investigation yesterday. The 78-year-old was found by staff sitting up in a cubicle at the Perthshire Hospital in Wakefield, West Yorkshire.

Probe demand

THE Tories yesterday called for the Department of Trade and Industry to appoint independent inspectors to investigate the collapse of former minister Geoffrey Robinson's engineering business.

Birmingham-based TransTec – which Mr Robinson has a 16% stake – was forced to call in the receivers just before Christmas. It emerged the group had failed to include in its accounts an £11.2million claim against it from Ford Motor Company. Shadow secretary of state for trade and industry Angela Browning said it was clear massive accounting irregularities had occurred.

Fashion tramp

THE Queen has been declared a fashion tramp by an American dress designer who says no forename. Mr Blackwell's annual worst-dressed-women list featured Her Majesty in third place. Cher was top and Celine Dion second.

Schools plea

THE Government's school admissions regulator yesterday came under attack in the English High Court. Peter Downes was accused of acting unlawfully and unreasonably when he ordered three secondary schools to cut by up to half the number of pupils to be selected on the basis of academic tests. The London borough of Wandsworth's application for judicial review continues today.

Retreat

TV actress Lynda Bellingham has said that a spell in a psychiatric hospital helped her rediscover God and come to terms with the trauma of her marriage break-up. The 51-year-old actress spent a week at an Episcopal retreat in California while filming a one-off programme for ITV just weeks before the court case which saw her former husband, Italian Nunzio Peluso, convicted of harassing her.

Store go-ahead

PLANS to store potentially BSE-infected meat and bone meal in a barn at a Lincolnshire village were given the go-ahead by the High Court in London yesterday. A judge rejected a move by Rosemary Turnbull, of Station Road, Blyton, for permission to challenge a decision of the Government's Environment Agency.