

MR TURNBULL

13 DECEMBER 1988

SALMONELLA IN EGGS

After we spoke, Richard Gueterbock, John MacGregor's Political Adviser, came to see me about the Government message on eggs.

MAFF are quite happy with the attached text prepared by Bernard Ingham. They believe that Department of Health are trying to sabotage the exercise. The press are expecting a statement from the Government on Friday. MAFF fear that Department of Health will continue to quibble about the text in order to miss the Friday deadline. The result will be press speculation that the Government cannot agree on what to say about eggs. This will be bad for the Government, let alone for the egg industry.

I relate the above for what it is worth.

Having been out of the office for two days, my first reaction was to share John Major's view that a statement by the Government might do more harm than good. But if it is the case that a statement is now widely expected, I tend to share MAFF's view that it would be better to go ahead with a suitably worded message on Friday than to leave the impression that Department of Health and MAFF are at loggerheads.



CAROLYN SINCLAIR

EGGS: THE FACTS

~~Most people go to work on an egg.~~ In fact, 30 million eggs are eaten in the United Kingdom each day - 200 million a week.

Eggs are a most valuable and nutritious part of a balanced diet.

And the number of cases of food poisoning from salmonella known to be linked to eggs is very small indeed compared with the huge numbers of eggs that are eaten.

The Government and the egg producers are urgently trying to get ~~rid~~ of the problem caused by salmonella.

In the meantime, ~~many~~ people who enjoy eggs want to know the facts about a basic part of their daily food.

The Government has therefore asked its Chief Medical Officer, Sir Donald Acheson, to advise consumers about eating eggs. This is what he says;

"for normal healthy people there is very little risk from eating eggs which are cooked, however you prefer them - boiled, fried, scrambled or poached.

"for ~~more~~ vulnerable people - that is, the elderly, the sick, babies, toddlers and pregnant women - eggs should be thoroughly cooked until the white and yolk are solid.

"but everyone should avoid eating raw eggs or uncooked foods made from them - for example, home made mayonnaise, home made mousses, home made icecream or raw eggs mixed with drinks."

The Chief Medical Officer adds:

"As with all cooked foods, egg dishes should be eaten as soon as possible after cooking. And if the dishes are not for immediate use they should be kept in the 'fridge'."

To sum up, The Chief Medical Officer says:

"You can still go to work on an egg - or enjoy your favourite egg dish - provided you follow the sensible advice I have set out above".

Issued by H.M. Government