

**Complaints Committee's decision in the case of
Jones v Daily Mail**

Reference no. 144327

The complainant was concerned that the newspaper had breached Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Editors' Code of Practice. The newspaper had published an article about a journalist's "scientific test" to see whether the use of "slop buckets" could spread salmonella and E.coli. The complainant was concerned that the article had contained inaccuracies. He also said that it had been misleading to describe the tests as being "scientific".

The terms of Clause 1 (Accuracy) state that "the press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures", and Clause 1 (ii) says "a significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion once recognised must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence".

The article stated that, in a 2009 trial (the *Evaluation of the WRAP Separate Food Waste Collection Trials*), "a quarter of those taking part reported terrible smells and infestations of maggots". In fact, the trial said that 24 per cent of people stated that concerns about hygiene odour and vermin had prevented them from participating in the trials. Only 6 per cent of those who had participated actually experienced such problems.

Given that the article had focused on the consequences of using a slop bucket, the inaccurate reporting of the study on this point represented a failure to take care not to publish misleading information. Under the terms of Clause 1 (ii), the newspaper was required to correct the inaccuracy. In the view of the Committee, the wording and prominence proposed by the newspapers was sufficient to correct the inaccuracy, and to remedy the initial breach of the Code. The corrections should now be published without further delay.

The complainant said that it had been inaccurate and misleading to describe the tests as being "scientific". While the Committee noted the complainant's concerns about the methodology used by the journalist and the veracity of the results, it had regard for the fact that the article had explained in detail the processes used. The article had not suggested that the journalist had compared her test with a controlled scenario to test an independent variable, nor had it said that the test had been repeated. The Committee took the view that, in the context of the article, it was clear that the term "scientific" was not being used as a technical term to describe the rigour or reliability of the experiment; the article explained that the journalist had conducted a test in her own home, using equipment that allowed her to test for the presence of bacteria. The Committee took the view that the article had not been significantly misleading regarding the methodology or basis on which the conclusions had been reached. There was no breach of the Code.

The complainant said that the test did not demonstrate that a slop bucket "could poison your family" unless it assumed that readers would not follow normal food hygiene practice. The article said salmonella had been found on the work surface. It included comments from food safety specialist Jerry Diplock who said "unless you are scrupulous about washing your hands, you risk carrying germs onto the food you are about to eat". He also made clear the risks of food contaminated with bacteria falling on to the work surfaces. The article had not been significantly misleading on this point. There was no breach of the Code.