



Listeria Control Measures

Processors of some ready-to-eat (RTE) foods must have procedures in place that manage *Listeria*. This factsheet provides simple tips to help keep *Listeria* out of RTE foods.



The below tips apply to chilled ready-to-eat foods that are either:

- minimally processed or are not heat processed, e.g. cold smoked seafood and deli salads; or
- handled, sliced or packed, after they've been cooked or processed to kill *Listeria*.



Remove places that *Listeria* could become established

- Have a system in place to inspect, repair and maintain equipment and surfaces.
- Have a system in place to inspect for and replace any damaged equipment seals and gaskets.
- Replace or repair damaged or hard-to-clean surfaces and equipment.
- Provide smooth surfaces with filled joints that are free from gaps, depressions, pits, cracks and crevices.
- Keep maintenance records.



Keep *Listeria* out of processing areas

- Keep out anything that isn't needed for food processing including equipment and maintenance tools.
- Restrict access to only those people that need to enter.
- Have clear personal hygiene instructions for people and equipment, e.g. hand washing, changing into protective clothing and footwear.
- Train staff, and give instructions to contractors and visitors on hygiene and movement requirements.
- Keep food preparation areas free of rubbish and pests.
- Prevent condensation from dripping onto foods or surfaces.
- Avoid water collecting on the floor that could splash on to the food.



Keep *Listeria* out of food

- Develop a cleaning and sanitising programme that target places *Listeria* likes to live.
- Handle RTE products before handling uncooked or raw products to prevent contamination by *Listeria*.
- Don't let the food come into contact with floor or anything that has been on the floor.
- Thoroughly clean hard to get into areas, where *Listeria* could be might live and grow e.g. conveyor belts, hollow tubing, behind bolts, etc.
- Make sure that equipment is thoroughly cleaned – examine the equipment and take it apart if you need to.
- Don't forget hard-to-reach parts, under and over equipment and places where *Listeria* could be and might live and grow.
- Clean and sanitise the drains.

Looking for more information?

Check out the MPI *Listeria* factsheets and guides by searching "Listeria" on the MPI website:

www.mpi.govt.nz. Contact MPI: info@mpi.govt.nz or 0800 00 83 33



Separate RTE foods from raw foods and ingredients

- Processing of RTE foods should take place in a dedicated area, preferably a separate room.
- If a separate room is not available, have a dedicated area within the same processing room.
- If there is no separate or dedicated area (not recommended), separate processing by time i.e. process the RTE food first.
- Have separate chillers for raw and processed foods, or store covered foods in different areas of the chiller as this is a key cross-contamination pathway.
- Wherever possible, have separate equipment for cooked and raw foods, e.g. weighing scales, slicing equipment, utensils, vacuum packer, etc.
- Using different coloured equipment for cooked and raw foods is an easy way to achieve separation e.g. chopping boards, knives and tongs.



Test the processing area for *Listeria*

- Develop and follow an environmental testing programme. See factsheet 4 for further guidance.
- Collect swabs from the processing area and test for *Listeria* on a regular basis to see whether the control measures are keeping *Listeria* out of the processing area.
- If *Listeria* is detected, take corrective action to remove *Listeria* from the processing area. See factsheets 6 and 7 for further guidance.