

Read this to find out why *Listeria* management procedures are important in your business.



New Zealand Food Safety
Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

Environmental testing for *Listeria*

You need to produce safe and suitable food so people don't get sick. Check that your *Listeria* control measures are effective with an environmental testing programme.

**RMP
Requirement**

What is needed?



1 A written plan of when and where to take samples regularly from the processing area.



3 Trained samplers who know **'how, where and when'** to take samples correctly.



2 A contract with an ISO/IEC17025 accredited laboratory.



4 Instructions on how to review and respond to the laboratory results.

Developing an environmental testing programme

An environmental testing programme should proactively look for *Listeria*. The design of your environmental testing programme will depend on your products, processes and premises.

1 Choosing sampling sites

- Sampling should be based on risk and should target:
 - areas where *Listeria* might live and grow
 - transfer sites where there is high potential for *Listeria* to be moved from one location to another.
- A floor plan of the food processing area should clearly identify sampling sites.

Common areas where *Listeria* can be found:

- Floors
- Drains
- Hoses and spray nozzles
- Damaged or porous contact surfaces
- Hard-to-clean areas inside processing equipment
- Chillers and refrigerators



For further guidance, check out the "Swabbing for *Listeria*" video on the MPI website: www.mpi.govt.nz.

Looking for more information?

Check out the New Zealand Food Safety *Listeria* factsheets and guides by searching "Listeria" on the New Zealand Food Safety website: www.foodsafety.govt.nz.
Contact New Zealand Food Safety: info@mpi.govt.nz

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Potential transfer sites where people, equipment, ingredients and product move within the processing area include:

- Product contact surfaces
- Accessways
- Door handles
- Ingredients and raw materials
- Floors in high-traffic areas
- Pallet jacks and trolleys
- Water (either liquid or aerosol)

2 Sampling frequency and sample numbers

Decide:

- how often to sample (e.g. weekly, fortnightly, monthly)
- how many samples each time (**5 different sites each time is a guide**).

Talk to your laboratory if you want to composite samples.

Don't composite samples from product and non-product contact surfaces together.



Samples should be taken at different times:

1 Before processing

- Check if cleaning is effective.
- Expect to find no *Listeria monocytogenes*.

2 During processing (best practice)

- 1–2 hours after start up.
- Check control measures and hygiene practices are working.

3 At end of shift

- Before cleaning and sanitation.
- Drains (everything on surface gets washed down drains so if *Listeria* is present it is more likely to be detected here).

1 Before processing



2 During processing



3 At end of shift



What to do with the results?



Record all results in a way that allows you to easily identify positive sites (e.g. spreadsheet, diagrams, labels on floor plan).



Review the environmental testing programme regularly and make changes (sampling sites and frequency), where appropriate.



Look for patterns or trends. Focus on areas giving positive results.



Corrective actions for positive *Listeria* results should be decided in advance. See factsheets 6 and 7 for further guidance.

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