

Campylobacter spp. in uncooked retail chicken meats

In recent times New Zealand has experienced high human campylobacteriosis notification rates. A *Campylobacter* Risk Management Strategy was put in place in 2006 to reduce this high disease burden.

To measure the impact on retail uncooked chicken meat following the introduction of the mandatory *Campylobacter* performance target (CPT) to primary broiler chicken processing one hundred and seventy-five samples of diced or minced retail chicken meat were tested for the prevalence and concentration of *Campylobacter* spp. Samples were obtained from April to July 2009 from retail outlets in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin using the protocol of the 2003–2004 survey, with a minor microbiological method modification that did not affect the comparability of the two sets of analyses.

The data demonstrated an appreciable significant decline in *Campylobacter* spp. prevalence between the two studies. When seasonality and duration of sampling were taken into account, a national reduction from 86 percent to 70 percent *Campylobacter* spp. prevalence was evident in the uncooked chicken products in the five-to-six year period between surveys. A drop in the percentage of samples with relatively higher counts was noticed from 8 percent to 3 percent when the two entire sampling periods were compared.

The survey demonstrated that the exposure of people to *Campylobacter* through raw poultry available at retail declined between 2004-5 and 2009, coinciding with the implementation of the *Campylobacter* Risk Management Strategy.

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