

A systematic approach to hygiene is critical in ensuring food safety

Food safety is a critical factor in the success of any meat processing business. It is too important to leave to chance as every other part of your business becomes secondary when a cross contamination event occurs.

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Adopting the correct systematic approach to food safety, which enables you to know exactly where problems may occur before they actually do, is essential to minimise risk and protect your reputation and profitability.

Meat processing risks

The microbiological risk in meat processing comes from potentially fatal pathogenic cross contaminations which cause foodborne illnesses. There have been many headline outbreaks over the years which have resulted in multiple consumer fatalities. The biggest causes of foodborne illness deaths in Europe will be familiar names to anyone in the meat processing industry.

Pathogenic micro-organisms, including salmonella, listeria and campylobacter – one species in particular, *Campylobacter jejuni*, tops the league table as the greatest cause of food poisoning in Europe – are located in the digestive tract of healthy cattle and sheep.

These potentially fatal micro-organisms can also be found on the hides and fleeces of the live animal via contamination from the animal's faeces, and this can then be transferred onto previously sterile meat surfaces during the slaughter process.

In 2015, 40% of food product recalls were due to microbiological contamination.

Focusing specifically on the impact of listeriosis, the European Food Safety Authority highlights that the number of confirmed human cases in 2016 were the least among the top five pathogens, yet with a fatality rate of 16.2%, accounted for more deaths (247) than the other four pathogens combined.



Hygiene is critical at every stage

These stark figures stress that there is no meat processing business that does not have ethical and legal responsibilities in maintaining the highest standards of hygiene.

It also reinforces that there is no part of your operations where you can relax your guard, or where the ever-present threat is diminished.

Hygiene of the entire process from the farm to packaging is critical in controlling cross contamination.

The smallest error can have disastrous consequences – impacting brand reputation and ultimately your profitability. When a food safety issue is identified it may already be too late.

Early detection and rapid response are crucial

Everyone in the meat processing industry aspires to early detection and rapid response to food safety issues. To achieve this you need to adopt the correct systematic approach to hygiene, which in turn will help you to ensure safety, operational efficiency and to provide shelf life extension.

A key requirement is a system which identifies exactly where problems may occur before they actually do.

Diversey has always played a significant role in helping its customers ensure that hygiene controls in production are effective, applying its renowned technical knowledge gained from a global presence and expertise developed over many years. SecureCheck is a solution from Diversey's Knowledge-based Services portfolio that is designed to help address food safety and operational efficiency challenges while reducing total costs.

SecureCheck is a unique diagnostic tool which provides specific tailored solutions for red meat and white meat processing, in addition to solutions targeting the most virulent pathogens – campylobacter and listeria – to reduce the risk in vital areas. These include: good manufacturing procedures, cleaning and sanitation solutions, personal hygiene and best practices, training and documentation.

A consultative approach

SecureCheck is characterised by a consultative approach. It starts with an assessment by experts trained to inspect

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and identify risk-sensitive areas throughout the production process.

Using a proprietary software package relevant data is collected relating to your site.

From production to final product storage, checks are instigated in the production facility using the system to analyse all process elements.

Monitoring services collect the data and provide you with a detailed initial and on-going analysis of your performance against historic and industry benchmark data.

After the inspection is completed, the data will be presented to you in an easy to understand format that highlights areas of risk, potential food safety breaches or contamination points, and pinpoints where processes can be improved.

A diagnostic snapshot

This statistical and data analysis effectively gives you a snapshot, identifying the areas within your process that have the potential to harbour and promote the spread of micro-organisms.

Because the result is a tailored action plan simplifying the management of food safety and hygiene throughout your site, which can then be implemented with help from the Diversey team, you will be able to solve

critical challenges that will help you make the biggest improvements.

Practical suggestions to mitigate the perceived risk, backed up by clear statistics that display the financial benefits and highlight efficiencies, will open up new courses of action to your business.

Using Diversey's diagnostic tool will help you improve and maintain food safety standards during your manufacturing process.

If you are monitoring progress over a specified time you can measure the impact and effectiveness of corrective actions, reducing the risk of contamination by implementing the recommendations made to drive efficiencies in utility, chemicals and labour.

Through prioritising areas of improvement and taking action and benchmarking your business against industry performance tools, you will ultimately reduce the microbiological burden on your final product, resulting in a higher quality product prior to packaging.

The value of this kind of total solution is in being preventative rather than predictive; combining global expertise in different fields to provide a snapshot that, unlike other audits, is not based on scoring your facility based on compliance to a set of rules.

As an operational solution it will evolve and provide you with industry-specific models for pathogens and food groups.

Mitigating your risks

Whether you are reluctant to admit to a food safety or hygiene issue; or there is no evidence that you have a current problem – the chance is that you may have a problem tomorrow. Therefore, it is always far better to be safe than sorry.

Mitigating the risk of the constant threat of pervasive pathogens will not only make your facility an even safer environment, but it will also make you even more in control for when an issue may arise.

You can be sure that when you initiate SecureCheck that Diversey's sector specialists are not just in the business of providing a report.

Identifying the areas within your process that have the potential to harbour and promote the spread of micro-organisms, while implementing the recommendations, will reduce your contamination risk and improve food safety.

By employing all aspects of SecureCheck's total solution, Diversey will also help you to maximise your return on investment and optimise your savings and efficiency by working with you as a partner to define, implement and manage projects. ■

References are available
from the author on request