



# ***Listeria* Facts and Control Strategies in Dairy Processing Facilities**

## **Risk and dangers of *Listeria* in your facility:**

- *Listeria* is a bacterium that thrives in cold, wet environments. *Listeria* can cause food-borne illness, and is associated with a high mortality rate compared to other food-borne illness pathogens.
- *Listeria* survives freezing, grows at refrigeration temperatures, and tolerates high salt and acid concentrations.
- *Listeria* thrives in biofilms, and once established in a facility, *Listeria* is very difficult to remove.
- Many Foods are susceptible to *Listeria* contamination including dairy products such as raw unpasteurized fluid milk, soft cheeses, raw milk cheeses, and ice cream.

## **Control Measures to Prevent Product Contamination:**

- Maintain separation between ready-to-eat (RTE) processing areas and raw ingredient (non-RTE) areas such as: personnel, equipment, food movement, cleaning procedures, and air-flow.
- Written Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP's) for food and non-food contact equipment and the proper implementation, verification and validation of sanitation procedures.
- Documentation of employee training on SSOPs, including training type, dates and times of training.
- Ensure the pasteurization process is maintained and verified, proper pasteurization eliminates pathogens including *Listeria*.
- Raw Milk can be a source of pathogens including *Listeria*, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) at the source farm can help reduce the risk.
- Good hygienic practices at the processing facility should be applied in order to prevent post-pasteurization contamination.

## **Sanitation Procedures:**

- Give special attention to RTE food-contact areas and areas of the plant that are difficult to clean and may harbor *Listeria* such as floor drains, floor wall junctures, equipment areas with small cracks and crevices, welds particularly those that aren't smooth, and areas that may hold moisture and debris.
- Use appropriate tools to allow scrubbing of food and non-food contact surfaces to remove soils and biofilms.
- Power washing may only be used in limited applications where overspray will not contaminate other equipment and products.
- Use proper detergent and sanitizer applications.
- Conduct post-cleaning inspection and documentation of procedure dates, times and personnel.

## ***Listeria* testing in the facility:**

- Routine facility testing to monitor for the presence of *Listeria* is highly recommended.
- Develop a testing plan that includes specific testing locations on both food and non-food contact equipment.
- Testing and regular monitoring is required under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), Preventive Controls for Humans Food Rule for most food processing facilities including dairy processors.
- For Grade "A" Milk Facilities environmental testing and monitoring may be required under the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance, Appendix T.

## **For more information about *Listeria*:**

- [FDA Draft Guidance on Control of \*Listeria\* RTEFoods-2017-01-10](#)
- [MDH Office of Food Protection– \*Listeria\* Prevention and FSMA rules in Manufactured Foods factsheet](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \*Listeria\* Guidance](#)
- [Food Safety Modernization Act, Preventive Control for Humans Foods Rule](#)
- [New York Center of Excellence Environmental Sampling Webinars](#)