

Listeria Facts and Control Strategies for Crab meat Processing and Picking Plants

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

- *Listeria monocytogenes* is a bacterium that thrives in cold, wet environments. *L. monocytogenes* can cause food-borne illness, and is associated with a high mortality rate compared to other food-borne illness pathogens.
- *L. monocytogenes* survives freezing, grows at refrigeration temperatures, and tolerates high salt and acid concentrations.
- *L. monocytogenes* thrives in biofilms, and once established in a facility, *Listeria* is very difficult to remove.
- Foods susceptible to *L. monocytogenes* contamination include ready-to-eat (RTE) crab, shrimp, produce, salads, dips, deli meats, sandwiches, soft cheeses, and dairy products.
- *L. monocytogenes* can enter your plant on shoes, clothing, carts, and raw crabs.
- *L. monocytogenes* often populates floors, drains, scrap/chum cans, hoppers and augers, loading docks and raw crab coolers.

Control Measures to Prevent Product Contamination:

- Ensure tight controls between RTE processing areas and raw ingredient (non-RTE) areas such as: personnel, equipment, food movement, cleaning procedures, and air-flow.
- Provide written Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP's) for food and non-food contact equipment and the proper implementation, verification and validation of sanitation procedures.
- Document SSOP training, application dates, times, and personnel

Sanitation Procedures:

- Give special attention to food-contact areas and other plant areas that are difficult to clean and may harbor *Listeria*. Some Examples: drains, coolers, HVAC condensate, mops, sponges, and conveyors.
- Use appropriate tools to allow scrubbing of food and non-food contact surfaces to remove soils and biofilms.
- Power washing should only be used in limited applications where overspray will not contaminate other equipment and products.
- Use appropriate 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 CFR 117 Subpart C unless the facility is exempt as listed by Subpart A CFR 117.5 or documented to be exempt by FDA attestation.

For more information about *Listeria*:

- *Listeria* training for plant personnel is available in seven (7) languages at: <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OEHFP/OFPCHS/Pages/Food-Processing-Guidance.aspx>
- 3 C's of *Listeria*: Characteristics, Contamination, and Control webinar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&time_continue=11&v=l8NSscc-B2o
- FDA Draft Guidance on Control of *Listeria* RTEFoods-2017-01-10 <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/draft-guidance-industry-control-listeria-monocytogenes-ready-eat-foods>
- MDH Office of Food Protection– *Listeria* Prevention and FSMA rules in Manufactured Foods factsheet <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OEHFP/OFPCHS/Pages/Food-Processing-Guidance.aspx>
- New York Integrated Food Safety Center of Excellence: <https://nyfoodsafety.cals.cornell.edu/>