

# LISTERIA DELICATESSEN CASE STUDY

## Incident summary

In March 2015, the NSW Food Authority received notification from NSW Health that food supplied through a suburban independent supermarket delicatessen, and other outlets, may be linked to a *Listeria monocytogenes* outbreak

## Investigation summary

The affected consumers had purchased meat and cheese products at delicatessens and independent supermarkets in NSW.

Whole Genome Sequencing showed that the source of the *Listeria monocytogenes* was most likely a ham product which was recalled several weeks earlier.

Cross contamination resulted in further spread within retail delicatessens.

In the investigation of one supermarket delicatessen a total of 25 swab and food samples were taken and 17 of those returned positive for *Listeria monocytogenes*, including:

- meat slicers;
- cling wrap dispensers;
- knives;
- scales; and
- other equipment,



indicating widespread cross contamination.

While the premises was visually clean and tidy with no build-up of food waste or visible dirt and grime, further inspection revealed:

- the dispenser that dispensed food contact surface sanitiser was broken and it appeared that an alternative was not being used until it was repaired
- the soap dispenser at the hand wash basin was empty and no soap was available for handwashing

- the meat slicing machine was cleaned daily but cleaning by itself is ineffectual without adequate sanitising.

## Food safety implication

Don't underestimate the importance of handwashing and sanitising. Although a premise may appear visibly clean pathogens can still be present. Sanitising and handwashing is critical.

Cross contamination from just one affected product can contaminate a whole facility without your knowledge.

During the day, regularly clean and sanitise surfaces in contact with food product



A failure of the most basic procedures, such as sanitising and hand washing puts customers at risk and can be expensive to remedy.

### Impact

The delicatessen was subject to a Prohibition Order that prevented “handling potentially hazardous foods, including ...ready to eat meat and cheese” for a period of 22 days.

This was a specialty area for the business which sold a large range of sliced meats and cheese products.

The premises also spent a considerable amount of money replacing cold storage units and fittings to ensure removal of contamination.

### What businesses should do

Ensure that all equipment and surfaces are **cleaned** and **sanitised** appropriately, and that all staff within the business understand the importance of this

Ensure that staff understand how to disassemble and clean equipment effectively.

Ensure that there are procedures in place for an alternative when sanitising equipment is broken/ being repaired.

Ensure adequate handwashing facilities are available for all staff including soap and hand towel.

### More information

Cleaning and sanitising in food businesses fact sheet

[http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/industry/cleaning\\_sanitising\\_food\\_businesses.pdf](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/industry/cleaning_sanitising_food_businesses.pdf)

Handwashing in food businesses

[http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retailfactsheets/hand\\_washing\\_food\\_businesses.pdf](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retailfactsheets/hand_washing_food_businesses.pdf)

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).



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