Cargill's commitment to reducing levels of Campylobacter in our supply chain

November 2015

Cargill takes its responsibilities for food safety very seriously and we are committed to reducing levels of Campylobacter in our chicken supply chain and to exceeding the target set jointly by industry and the Food Standards Agency (FSA). As a member of the 'Acting on Campylobacter Together' (ACT) Board, we are working together with the UK poultry industry, retailers and the FSA to identify and implement solutions to minimise the problem caused by this naturally occurring bacteria present in the gut of animals and birds.

As a priority we have been taking steps and making investments to improve and upgrade our processes and operations as part of our farm-to-fork action plan to tackle Campylobacter. We have focused on four key areas where we believe the most significant impacts can be made – on farm biosecurity, on manufacturing processes in the factory, on the finished packed product and also on new technological innovations.

To date we have invested over £35 million in the last two years to make improvements to our facilities, including £11 million for a new state of the art chiller. Currently we are installing the most modern hygienic primary processing lines to replace the original equipment at a further cost of more than £10 million.

Additionally we have introduced the latest SonoSteam equipment into our operation, ahead of schedule, which uses a combination of steam and ultrasound to kill microorganisms such as Campylobacter on the skin and internal cavities of chicken. This new technology is now operational and, combined with the ultraviolet light (UV) finished pack decontamination equipment already installed, will have a significant reduction impact on Campylobacter levels.

Campylobacter is eradicated by cooking. Everyone handling fresh chicken and other meats should always use good kitchen hygiene practices – including not washing raw chicken and ensuring that food is thoroughly cooked before serving.

Farm

Training farmers, improved biosecurity and auditing, rapid on-farm testing, review of thinning practices

In the UK we source our chickens from carefully selected farmers operating in accordance with detailed agricultural procedures, with our farms independently audited against the Red Tractor Farm Assurance scheme. All our farmers receive comprehensive information on Campylobacter and we have optimised our on-farm biosecurity procedures which are continually audited to help protect our flocks from infection. By reviewing our extensive historical data and by conducting farm trials we are investigating the potential impact of 'thinning' (the practice of removing a proportion of birds from a flock and allowing the remainder to stay for longer), while strengthening the biosecurity controls for our bird catching operations. All our flocks are tested on-farm for Campylobacter and additionally we are researching whether Campylobacter infection could occur in agriculture from the parent egg-laying birds.

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Factory

Optimised rinsing and washing, neck skin trimming, improved product handling and procedures

We continue to work on a number of initiatives designed to further enhance our production processes. We have installed new rinsing stations and following trials have significantly improved the effectiveness of our bird washing equipment in accordance with recognised best practice guidelines. We have developed new product handling procedures throughout our operation and refurbished equipment to optimise the effectiveness of chicken neck skin trimming. Earlier this year we also invested £11 million in the installation of new chicken air-chilling process facilities to maximise our control of product temperatures.

Finished Product

Testing and monitoring

We are continuing our microbiological testing for chickens after processing and to further monitor our performance, we conduct tests on our chicken products purchased from retail outlets.

Innovation

Industry trials and introductions of new technologies

At our Hereford facility we have introduced SonoSteam equipment, a new technology which uses a combination of steam and ultrasound to kill microorganisms such as Campylobacter on the skin and internal cavities of chicken. We have also installed new ultraviolet light (UV) finished pack decontamination technology as an additional precaution to eliminate any residual Campylobacter that might potentially be present on outer packaging surfaces.

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