

Campylobacter levels remain steady

The top nine retailers across the UK have today published their latest testing results on campylobacter contamination in UK-produced fresh whole chickens (covering samples tested from July to September 2018).

The latest figures show that on average, across the major retailers, 3.5% of chickens tested positive for the highest level of contamination. These are the chickens carrying more than 1,000 colony forming units per gram (cfu/g) of campylobacter. The corresponding figure for the previous set of results (April - June 2018) was 3.7%, while for the first publication (July-September 2017) it was 4.6%.

Michael Wight, Director of Policy at the Food Standards Agency said:

'The latest figures show further progress being made in our efforts to reduce campylobacter in UK-produced fresh whole chickens.

'We will continue to build on these encouraging results, working closely with retailers and smaller poultry businesses to bring levels down to as low as reasonably achievable.

'Thanks again to the major retailers and poultry producers for continuing to tackle campylobacter and for working alongside the FSA in the publication of the results.'

Results

The average percentage of chickens in each band of contamination from the retailers' own data can be found in the table below.

Contamination levels	July-September 2017	October-December 2017	January-March 2018	April-June 2018	July-September 2018
cfu/g less than 10	48.7%	57.7%	59.1%	60.6%	58.8%
cfu/g 10-99	28.3%	22.0%	23.9%	23.3%	26.7%
cfu/g 100-1000	18.4%	16.7%	13.2%	12.5%	11%
cfu/g over 1000	4.6%	3.6%	3.8%	3.7%	3.5%

Results by retailer for July - September 2018

- [Aldi results](#)
- [Asda results](#)
- [Co-op results](#)
- [Lidl results](#)
- [Marks and Spencer results](#)
- [Morrisons results](#)
- [Sainsbury's results](#)

- [Tesco results](#)
- [Waitrose results](#)

The sampling and analyses are carried out in accordance with protocols laid down by the FSA and agreed by Industry.

Background information

We have been testing chickens for campylobacter since February 2014 and publishing the results as part of a campaign to bring together the whole food chain to tackle the problem. Campylobacter is the most common cause of food poisoning in the UK.

On 21 September 2017 we announced changes to the survey, with major retailers carrying out their own sampling and publishing their results under robust protocols laid down by the FSA. We are continuing to sample fresh whole chickens sold at retail, however, the focus is now on the smaller retailers and the independent market.

Consumer advice

Chicken is safe if consumers follow good kitchen practice:

- Cover and chill raw chicken - cover raw chicken and store at the bottom of the fridge so juices cannot drip onto other foods and contaminate them with food poisoning bacteria such as campylobacter
- Don't wash raw chicken - thorough cooking will kill any bacteria present, including campylobacter, while washing chicken can spread germs by splashing
- Wash used utensils - thoroughly wash and clean all utensils, chopping boards and surfaces used to prepare raw chicken
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, after handling raw chicken - this helps stop the spread of campylobacter by avoiding cross-contamination
- Cook chicken thoroughly - make sure chicken is steaming hot all the way through before serving. Cut into the thickest part of the meat and check that it is steaming hot with no pink meat and that the juices run clear.