

Baseline study published on the occurrence of *Campylobacter* spp. and *Salmonella* spp. in broiler carcasses

BfR Opinion Nr. 010/2010, 16 July 2009

Campylobacter and *Salmonella* are the most common bacterial causes of gastrointestinal infections in humans. Both pathogens are often detected in poultry. Chicken meat is a common source of infection for humans for *Campylobacter* as well as *Salmonella*. In order to assess the prevalence of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in broilers at the time of slaughter, the European Union has carried out a baseline study in all Member States. Data were collected between 1 January and 31 December 2008 according to a study design predefined by the EU.

Germany has now published the German results of the baseline study. The regional authorities took samples at the slaughterhouses, isolated the pathogens and collected the data. The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) supervised the laboratory work, typed the isolates, gathered the national data and prepared the report.

In Germany, *Campylobacter* was detected on 62.0% of 432 examined carcasses (skin sample), and *Salmonella* was detected on 17.6%. However, the amount of *Campylobacter* on contaminated carcasses varied considerably between just a few bacteria and over 100,000 bacteria per gram of chicken meat. In nearly half (48.6%) of the slaughter batches, *Campylobacter* was also found in the animal intestines. In such cases, the probability that the carcasses from this batch were also contaminated with *Campylobacter* was especially high. The data also emphasise that the *Campylobacter* contamination of carcasses was substantially higher in the warm summer months than in the winter months.

The national data show that *Campylobacter* as well as *Salmonella* can often be detected in chickens at the time of slaughter. Both pathogens enter the slaughterhouse along with the animals and can be transmitted to the carcasses during slaughter. From here they enter into the food chain and reach the consumer. BfR therefore urges consumers to take special care of kitchen hygiene when preparing chicken meat and to only consume well-cooked broiler meat. In addition, the meat should be stored and prepared separately from other foodstuffs ensuring that pathogens cannot be transmitted to these.

The full version of this BfR Opinion is available in German on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/grundlagenstudie_zum_vorkommen_von_campylobacter_spp_und_salmonella_spp_in_schlachtkoerpern_von_masthaehnchen_vorgelegt.pdf