

Types of In-plant Testing

Environmental surface testing is most often performed in the areas where exposed product is handled, such as in the post-lethality processing and packaging areas, to discover where *Listeria* might be found. Examples are air handling units, walls, floors, and drains. Environmental testing results would be used to evaluate the effectiveness of sanitation programs and develop methods to improve them. Positive tests may indicate a problem with the sanitation program such that *Listeria* exists in the environment and may or may not have been transferred to product produced in that environment. Positive environmental tests should be followed up by corrective actions such as intensive cleaning and further testing.

Food contact surface testing includes any equipment or utensils that would come into direct contact with the exposed RTE product. Examples are slicers, peelers, tables, and knives. A positive *Listeria* spp. result on a food contact surface implies that any finished product that has touched that surface may have become contaminated. A positive *Lm* result on a food contact surface means that the product that has come in contact with the contaminated surface is adulterated.

Product testing determines whether *Lm* is present on the product. RTE product is adulterated if it contains *Lm* and is evidence that *Lm* contamination may be a food safety hazard reasonably likely to occur in the post-lethality processing environment.