

Listeria monocytogenes

Listeria monocytogenes is a common bacterium found in the environment and can be carried by humans and animals. It has been isolated at every level of the meat processing chain, including slaughter and processing plant environments. *L. monocytogenes* can cause an infection after the ingestion of virulent strains. Certain population segments are at high risk of contracting listeriosis, including pregnant women, the elderly and immunocompromised individuals (e.g., transplant patients, persons with cancer), which can result in serious illness and even death. This pathogen is of concern in the production of dried meats, since it is able to grow under both aerobic and anaerobic conditions and can survive dry conditions. It is also salt tolerant and can grow over a wide temperature range (31.3-113°F, -0.4-45°C), which includes refrigeration. It does not grow well in acid conditions, but can survive.

In addition to good sanitation and avoiding cross contamination, *Listeria* can be controlled by a combination of lower pH, high brine concentration, and competitive exclusion (and in some cases bacteriocin production) with lactic acid starter cultures, varying degrees of heat processing, and the drying process.