

## PW443 Evaluation of *Escherichia coli* counts in poultry meat in Spain

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**Background:** The intestinal tract of poultry could contain pathogens such as *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. In order to reduce the poultry carcasses contamination with *Campylobacter* spp. the hygienic status of the slaughter operations are of great importance. *E. coli* in poultry carcasses is associated to enteric contamination during processing. Thus, this bacteria could be used to indicate contamination during processing.

**Objectives:** The present study was conducted to determine the numbers of *E. coli* in poultry meat, in order to evaluate the hygienic status of two processing plants.

**Methods:** Two thousand and twenty two samples were taken in the period 2009-2012 in two processing plants. Samples were taken from whole carcasses, and meat portions (wings, legs, breasts). *E. coli* was determined according to ISO 16140.

**Results:** *E. coli* counts below 1 log cfu/g were observed in 11.26% and 3.92% samples from the processing plant A and B, respectively. The highest *E. coli* counts were observed in whole carcasses and wing from plant A. A decrease in *E. coli* counts were observed in both processing plants comparing the data obtained in 2009 and 2012. The *E. coli* counts in the processing plant A were 3.93 log cfu/g in 2009 and 2.46 log cfu/g in 2012. The values for the processing plant B were 2.65 log cfu/g in 2012. Since some studies have associated the presence of *Campylobacter* in poultry carcasses with *E. coli* counts above 3 log cfu/g, the decrease observed in *E. coli* counts is of great importance.