

18th April 2018,

LISTERIOSIS OUTBREAK IN SOUTH AFRICA
UPDATED CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

Dear Valued Customer,

On the 4th March 2018 the food manufacturing industry and supply chain of perishable ready-to-eat product was rocked by the biggest national recall of a consumer product in the history of the South African food industry.

The source of the Listeriosis outbreak was identified as ready-to-eat processed meat products manufactured at Enterprise Foods' Polokwane production facility.

Following the national recall announcement incidents of Listeriosis have declined.

Sadly however the number of confirmed cases has risen to 1011 with 193 confirmed deaths.

FACTS:

- Listeria is not a new bacteria, and has been an identified pathogenic (disease causing bacteria) in the food industry since the 1800's
- *Listeria monocytogenes* is a pathogenic bacteria (foodborne illness causing) that is widespread in the environment – found in soil, vegetation, water, sewerage and in the faeces of humans and animals.
- It can cause a rare but very serious disease – Listeriosis, and certain vulnerable members of the population are susceptible to this disease – pregnant women, the elderly, and those with a weakened immune system in particular.
- The mild form of foodborne listeriosis usually occurs about 24hrs after eating contaminated food products.
- However the more severe form of the disease may only manifest 70-90 days after exposure and the symptoms may progress to a more serious form of illness such as meningitis (brain infection) as well as septicaemia.
- Unlike most other food contamination bacteria, Listeria can survive and grow in a refrigerator. Food contaminated with Listeria looks, smells and tastes normal.
- It is important to note that Listeria is readily killed by thorough cooking.

BASIC LISTERIA CONTROL PROCEDURES:

- Food handler staff to wash & sanitise hands frequently particularly between handling raw and ready-to-eat food
- Strict adherence to temperature control and refrigerators need to be kept clean and sanitised to avoid cross contamination.
- Buy all food products from reputable suppliers who can offer you assurance of where the product originates from and how it was manufactured and handled at all times.
- Products stored in refrigerator to be kept in airtight containers once outer packaging has been opened and used within shelf-life
- Storage of raw meat, poultry and raw fish on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator to prevent them from dripping onto cooked and ready-to-eat foods.

- Stock rotation and ensuring a FIFO stock rotation policy.
- Prevent cross contamination by use of colour coded utensils and food contact surfaces – chopping boards etc.
- All raw fruit & vegetables must be washed and sanitised before eating, juicing, slicing, dicing or any other application when consumed fresh.
- Do not defrost foods at room temperature.
- Keep hot foods hot > 65°C and cold foods cold < 7°C.
- Reheat food until internal temperature reaches a minimum of 75°C. Use a sanitised calibrated probe thermometer to test core temperatures of food during cooking and storage.

The reality is that no food manufacturer, distributor, supplier or retailer can issue a statement saying that all ready-to-eat, high risk foods are free of Listeria as all stakeholders in the supply chain are responsible for ensuring that food safety controls are diligently implemented at all times.

Bidfood has reinforced very stringent internal operational controls and supplier quality assurance controls in terms of high risk product suppliers and we are in constant contact with our suppliers for information on both product and environmental monitoring relating to Listeria.

Thank you for your on-going support and commitment during this challenging time in our industry. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly should you have any particular concerns jane.russill@bidfood.co.za.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times.

Yours sincerely

Jane Russill

Quality Risk Executive