

OCCURRENCE AND NUMBERS OF *CAMPYLOBACTER* SPP. ON WINGS AND DRUMSTICKS OF BROILER CHICKENS AT THE RETAIL LEVEL IN LITHUANIA

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Summary. The present study was designed to investigate the occurrence and numbers of *Campylobacter* spp. on broiler chicken wings and drumsticks at the retail level of the three main poultry meat producers in Lithuania. Samples of chicken wings and drumsticks were collected of each poultry meat producer by visiting randomly selected retail shops once a week from March till October, in 2009. During each visit to a shop, samples of wings and drumsticks were bought without giving a warning. A total of 87 chicken wings and 87 drumsticks samples were collected and tested for *Campylobacter* spp. Thermophilic *Campylobacter* spp. were isolated by both direct inoculation on mCCDA selective medium and by selective enrichment in Bolton enrichment broth. Multiplex-PCR method was used for detection and identification of thermophilic *Campylobacter* species.

Our findings showed that overall 46.55% (81 out of 174) of the collected samples were contaminated with campylobacters. Twenty nine samples out of 81 were confirmed as positive only after enrichment procedure. *C. jejuni* has been found in 69.12% of the tested samples and *C. coli* in 13.23%, and both species together in 17.65%, respectively. The mean number of *Campylobacter* bacteria detected on wings at the retail was 1.99 log₁₀ CFU/ml and on drumsticks 2.11 log₁₀ CFU/ml.

This study shows high occurrence of broiler meat contamination with *Campylobacter* spp. at a retail level in Lithuania. Therefore the risk for consumers should be evaluated and an improvement of control measures at poultry production and retail level should be considered to reduce the risk for consumer's infection with *Campylobacter* spp.

Keywords: *Campylobacter* spp., chicken, retail, occurrence, contamination.