

A Campylobacter outbreak associated with a national food chain – are we listening to the implications?

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2015: Campylobacter in context

	Food Poisoning		Campylobacter		Salmonella	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Wales	4,509	145.8	3,776	122.1	360	11.6
Range	57 - 582	96.5 – 220.9	50 - 444	66.3 – 178.7	4 - 54	4.0 – 19.7
Bridgend	155	109.8	129	91.4	14	9.9
Cardiff	582	164.3	444	125.3	54	15.2
Vale	221	173.1	197	154.3	11	8.6

- E. coli O157: 0 – 5 cases; Rate: 0.0 – 6.6

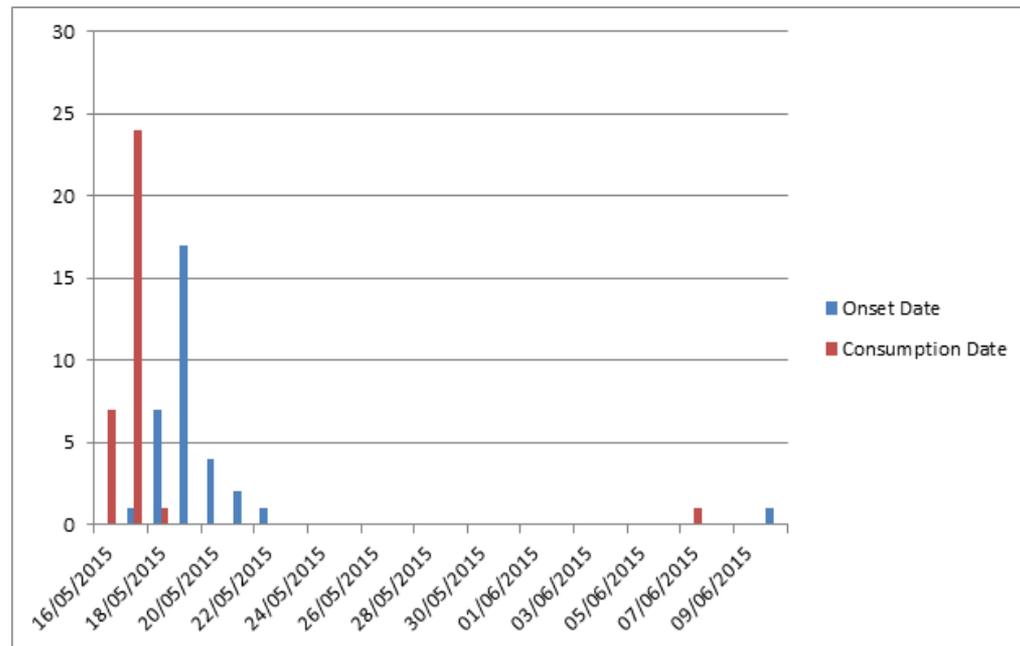
Source: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection#!/>

Straightforward control measures but effective application in the commercial sector can be complex



Features of the outbreak

- Early identification/proactive case finding against a large background of sporadic cases
- Point source outbreak
- 33 cases residing in 6 LAs
- Case control study undertaken
- Cross contamination of the pasta salad was the most likely source of the outbreak
- OR 38, 95% CI 1.8 – 248; $p = 0.016$)
- Associated with a national restaurant chain



Food Safety Investigation Findings/Challenges

- High throughput food business (750+ meals/day) with multiple episodes of raw chicken and salad preparation during the day
- Risk of cross-contamination of salad during preparation
- Food sample & swab results interpretation
- Return to work policy breaches
- Areas of non compliance with statutory requirements – 1 food hygiene rating given
- Issues relating to the Primary Authority response
- Voluntary closure



Challenge - Staff Interviews

- 50 staff operating over different shifts
- Inconsistencies in responses & written procedures provided
- Company initially reluctant
- Meeting held with company
- Briefing/letter for staff
- Structured interviews
- In future?

Cross contamination issues and E coli guidance interpretation

- **Poor work flow**
- **Some physical separation but also reliance on two stage cleaning and personal hygiene**
- **Guidance used to defend current arrangements in business and lodge an appeal**
- **Need to design out as far as possible, potential for human error.**



E. coli O157 Control of Cross-contamination

Guidance for food business operators and local authorities

For all queries about this guidance — including if you require the information in an alternative format such as audio, large print or Braille — please use the email below.

CONTACT DETAILS: controllingecoli@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk



Salad Preparation

- Same surface to prepare salad items and root vegetables
- Cooled in contact with sink using ice
- High temp of 'cooled' pasta
- Pasta salad, coleslaw & potato salad mixed with bare hands
- Removed from menu

Primary Authority Contact

- PA notified following voluntary closure
- PA disagreed with works required on voluntary closure agreement leading to delays
- Assured advice provided?
 - Food safety policy
 - Food preparation processes
 - Layout

Works undertaken to reopen

- Additional chilled units purchased for separate storage of raw and ready to eat foods
- A new raw meat preparation area provided with separate raw gloves, aprons, red knives and sanitiser.
- Hand contact surfaces cleaned and disinfected
- Managers re-trained in return to work procedures and personal hygiene
- Staff refresher training in company salad washing procedure, critical aspects of food safety policy and site specific workflows
- Dishwasher servicing information provided
- Linear workflow in place

Swabs & Food sample interpretation

Food Samples:

- Results not particularly useful
- Delay in testing

Environmental Swabs:

- Lack of national guidelines for interpretation
- Usefulness of swabbing for pathogens ?
- Swabbing for ACCS & enterobacteriaceae of many surfaces e.g. chiller handles, rinse sink for salad, taps, chopping boards = unsatisfactory
- Reservations around interpretation but supported concerns about current control measures for cross contamination

Action taken by company nationwide

- Cross contamination awareness training for all General Managers and Kitchen Managers.
- Review of raw meat handling procedures to make them clearer and simpler. Operators involved in the rewriting of procedures.
- Every kitchen visited in order to review the kitchen layout and achieve the best possible linear flow without cross over between raw chicken and salads.
- Work ongoing with regards to the supply chain of fresh chickens to minimise Campylobacter contamination.



Communications with media

Issuing a proactive press release without naming the premises resulted in this decision becoming the media focus rather than the outbreak

WALES ON LINE

Cardiff restaurant closed after food poisoning outbreak

Public Health Wales made the announcement after seven people were confirmed with campylobacter infection

Outbreak Evaluation

- Cause of outbreak
 - Food handler interviews
- Surveillance and detection
 - Benefit of telephone interviews of cases
- Preparedness
 - The benefits of the Wales Outbreak Plan and the Lead Officer training for communicable disease in Wales
- Management and control of the outbreak
 - Primary Authority issues
 - Cost of investigation to SRS = £15,103.48

Moving Forward

- The new terms of the Incidents and Outbreaks Sub Group
- The role of the All Wales Expert Panels
- E.coli guidance needs review in light of issues identified
- FSA & Better Regulation need to work together to develop advice for PA in outbreak situations
- National guidance needed for swab results

Any Questions?

