How Often Retail Delis Inspect Their Slicers:
EHS-Net Findings and Recommendations

EHS-Net Recommends

We recommend that food safety programs and the retail industry

- Ensure their delis have trained and knowledgeable staff.
- Focus interventions designed to improve slicer inspection and cleaning practices on independent and smaller delis.

Take apart, clean, and inspect slicers every 4 hours

Why This Study Was Done

*Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) causes the third highest number of foodborne illness deaths in the United States each year. *Lm* contamination of sliced deli meats at retail delis is a major cause of listeriosis illness and outbreaks.

To prevent *Lm* cross-contamination and growth, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code recommends restaurant workers

- Take apart, clean, and sanitize slicers at least every 4 hours.
- Inspect slicers each time they are fully cleaned.
- Ensure slicers are free of damage.

Knowing more about how retail delis inspect their slicers and about the condition of those slicers can help delis and food safety programs reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

What the Study Described

The study described

- The condition of retail deli slicers and how often they are inspected.
- Deli, manager, and worker traits linked with better slicer inspection practices and with better slicer conditions.
What the Study Found

Most delis inspect their slicers, but only 1 in 4 reported inspecting their slicers as often as FDA recommends. 3 in 5 delis had slicers that were damaged.

Delis were more likely to inspect their slicers within the time recommended by FDA if they

- Were a chain deli.
- Served more than 300 customers on their busiest day.

Delis were more likely to have undamaged slicers if they

- Were a chain deli.
- Provided training to their deli workers.

Key Terms:

Foodborne illness: an illness caused by germs in food.

Listeria monocytogenes: germ that causes the foodborne illness listeriosis, a serious infection.

Retail delis: delis that prepare or serve ready-to-eat foods to customers where, typically, food is taken elsewhere to be eaten. Grocery stores often have retail delis.

This study was conducted by the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net).

EHS-Net is a federally funded collaboration of federal, state, and local environmental health specialists and epidemiologists working to better understand the environmental causes of foodborne illness.