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Peer Review

Review of: "Food-Contact-Surface and Product-Test *Listeria monocytogenes* Positivity in U.S. Ready-to-Eat Meat and Poultry Establishments: Concurrent, Cumulative, and Temporally Separated Associations in USDA-FSIS Sampling Data, 2015-2025"

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The article provides a useful analysis of USDA-FSIS test results that demonstrate some relationships between food contact surface test results and product test results. This will always be a difficult area to show correlations because environmental samples may not be collected at similar times as product samples, and the proportion of product samples that test positive may be very low (which may not be able to show statistical significance).

This article will be difficult for many people to understand or appreciate the statistical analysis. Nevertheless, I do not think you need to reduce or replace your explanations or discussions since they are important to the conclusions you draw. Perhaps I need to know a little more about how the product, FCS, and NFCS samples are selected. Or, how many FCS samples are collected after a product sample is positive or how many product samples are collected after an FCS positive.

Introduction: What do the terms “RTEPROD_RAND, RTEPROD_RISK” refer to?

Section 2.2: You mention “routine product” samples. Are there routine FCS and NFCS samples?

Can intensified/for-cause samples be products, FCS, or both?

doi.org/10.32388/19NDRS

Some conclusions I was anticipating in this article were not apparent to me. Perhaps you answered these and I did not readily find them. Or maybe it is not possible to draw certain conclusions. For example.....

1) Were you able to determine that if an FCS was positive, then there was a ## % chance of product test positivity or that the chance of product positivity increased by a factor of ##?

2) How many positive FCS samples per establishment could be correlated to a positive product sample test?

3) Since many establishments test FCS for Listeria (rather than Lm), did you review data that reported Listeria-positive results (beyond the Lm positive results)?

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.