

**B-79: Use of plasmid profiles of *Escherichia coli* for detection of sites of cross-contamination in broiler processing**

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Fifty samples of chicken neck skin and cloacal swabs were collected from 4 different stages of broiler processing plant, namely, after bleeding, scalding, plucking and evisceration. These samples were used to enumerate coliforms and to isolate *Escherichia coli*. The geometric means of coliforms decreased progressively during processing from 6.7 log cycles (after bleeding), 6.2 (after scalding), 5.7 (after plucking), to 5.3 (after evisceration), suggesting processing improved the hygiene. However of 162 isolates of *E. coli* 151 (93%) contained plasmids with 17 different plasmid profiles. Majority of strains showed multiple plasmids and 1 multiple plasmid carrying strain was dominant in all stages of processing. The appearance of 4 new profiles after scalding and 3 new profiles after plucking, showed evidence of cross-contamination but evisceration appeared to be less important in this respect.