

# Managing *Listeria* in Drains

## What is *Listeria*?

- *Listeria* is a group of bacteria that includes *Listeria monocytogenes*, the foodborne pathogen which causes listeriosis.
- *Listeria monocytogenes* can be found in many areas in the food chain. It occurs naturally in the environment and can be isolated from water soil, and feces<sup>1-2</sup>. Outbreaks with *Listeria monocytogenes* are commonly traced back to indoor packinghouses or food processing facilities<sup>3-5</sup>.
- *Listeria* thrives in damp conditions and can grow in refrigerator temperatures with or without oxygen<sup>6-8</sup>. Once established, *Listeria* can persist in post-harvest areas for long periods of time<sup>9</sup>.

## Why is *Listeria* a problem in drains?

- Constantly wet areas, especially **drains** in the packinghouse can provide a good environment for *Listeria* to grow. Unsafe produce handling and packing practices can cross-contaminate *Listeria* from these areas onto your product.
- Proper cleaning, sanitizing, and maintenance of these areas can reduce colonies of *Listeria*<sup>10-11</sup>.
- Follow these tips below to minimize dispersal of *Listeria* and other microbes from drains to other packinghouse surfaces during cleaning and sanitizing.

### DO

- Remove produce from the area and use a splash guard to prevent contamination due to splashing.
- Train personnel who clean the drains to change clothes and gloves, and wash and sanitize hands before subsequently touching any food contact surfaces.
- Use brushes that are at least ¼ inch (0.64 cm) smaller than the diameter of the drain opening to prevent splattering during cleaning.

### DO NOT

- Clean drains when food products or packaging are nearby.
- Use high-pressure hoses to clear or clean a drain. The use of such hoses could create aerosols that could spread contamination throughout the room.
- Use the same tools to clean the drain and then clean food contact surfaces. Color code to distinguish drain cleaning tools from tools used for other purposes.

## References

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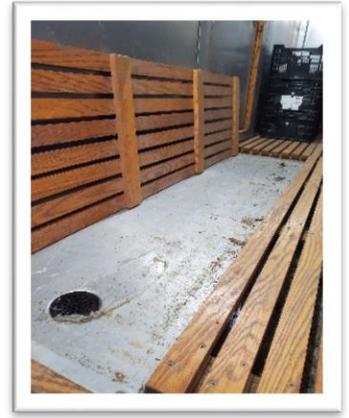


Figure 1: Drain set up in a cold room. (Photo credit A. Ferelli).