



Section

Fields (of activity)

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Exploratory Survey on Food Safety and Consumer Behavior

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Key words

Food safety, consumer behavior, hygiene measures, Campylobacter

Aim of the study

Campylobacter infections are the main cause of health complaints associated with food. Poultry meat, especially chicken meat, has been identified as the most significant source of infection. Despite efforts, it has not been possible to reduce the number of cases. The aim of this study was therefore to assess the current situation with regard to kitchen hygiene by means of a consumer survey and to determine the acceptance of possible measures to reduce campylobacteriosis in the supply chain.

Material and methods

In November 2024, the LINK Institute for Market and Social Research surveyed over 1,200 people aged 18 to 79 living in Switzerland. The average time it took to complete the online questionnaire was ten minutes.

Results and significance

The results show that only a good 20% of respondents are familiar with campylobacter. By contrast, the vast majority (83.9%) are familiar with salmonella, a much less serious problem.

Hygiene measures in the household are implemented well for the most part, measures in connection with the fridge and freezer even very well. Hygiene measures such as washing hands and work utensils are in the middle range. Respondents also try to avoid direct contact between raw meat and other foodstuffs. However, when it gets more specific, such as when grilling or making fondue chinoise, the implementation rate decreases, as it does for indirect contact via chopping boards and other kitchen utensils. The measure of safe choice, such as buying frozen chicken, brings up the rear. Women and older people, as well as respondents who are familiar with campylobacter, are generally more likely to implement the measures in the household.

The reasons for a lack of implementation are manifold and range from a lack of knowledge to costly and error-prone to trivialization. Exceptional cases and a lack of practicability are also mentioned.

Measures that start with meat processing in the industry were surveyed twice: once with little information on Campylobacter and later after detailed information had been provided. Selling frozen chicken meat in supermarkets is by far the most accepted measure with over 70%, regardless of how much information the respondents had. In general, knowledge about the seriousness of Campylobacter and the effectiveness of the measures leads to slightly higher acceptance values. One exception is irradiation, where acceptance rose very sharply from 36.8% to 52.8%. After the provision of information, it is therefore the measure of second choice from the consumers' point of view. Treatment with chlorine is far behind with values below 30%; surface-frozen with carbonic acid and treatment with lactic acid or acetic acid are in the middle range of acceptance. Men, people from German-speaking Switzerland and respondents living in cities generally show a higher acceptance of these measures.

In addition to socio-demographic characteristics, personality constructs such as willingness to take risks, affinity for food safety, affinity for health or the importance of a healthy diet also have an effect on the acceptance of the measures. There is a consistent pattern for hygiene measures in the household: a general willingness to take risks is also expressed in an increased willingness to take risks in the kitchen. The three other personality constructs lead to a stronger implementation of the measures. The picture is not as clear for the measures in meat processing, but it can be said that the provision of information on food safety is able to dispel concerns, while in the case of health and nutrition it tends to force correlations.

Publications, posters and presentations

To come.

Project Aramis Nr. 6.24.02

Project duration 01/08/2024 to 31/01/2025