Retail poultry and beef as sources of campylobacter jejuni

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Abstract

Objectives: To investigate the level of contamination with C. jejuni of raw chicken and beef meats sold in Nairobi and to assess their potential as sources of campylobacter infections to man. Design: Dressed chicken and beef meat samples were randomly sourced from butcheries, markets and supermarkets in various parts of Nairobi over a period of two months. One hundred chicken and 50 beef samples were bacteriologically examined by selective enrichment and culture under microaerophilic environment. Thermophilic campylobacters were identified and characterised using standard physical and biochemical tests. Setting: Veterinary Public Health Laboratories, Kabete, University of Nairobi. Results: Thermophilic campylobacters were isolated from 77 (77%) poultry samples and one (2 %) beef sample. Isolation rate (85.3 %) was higher from chickens <24 hours old since slaughter than those >24 hours old. The beef isolate was 2% C. jejuni. Poultry samples yielded C. jejuni (59%), C. coli (39% and C. laridis (2%). Conclusion: These findings show that poultry meat sold at the counter is a major source of C. jejuni and C. coli, and that it is an important potential source of campylobacter infection. Proper cooking and hygienic handling before consumption is therefore essential.