# Annex 3 - controls at supplier level

Suppliers of beef/minced beef/beef burgers to be LTTC must have hygienic procedures in place during slaughter, cutting, mincing and any other relevant process.

Suppliers of beef/minced beef/beef burgers to be LTTC must have hygienic procedures in place during slaughter, cutting, mincing and any other relevant process. Their procedures must focus on minimising contamination with pathogens.

Information about reducing potential contamination during slaughter, cutting and manufacturing of minced meat and beef burgers or patties is available in the Manual for Official Controls (MOC) (England and Wales) /Manual for Official Controls (VPHP) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI) and the FSA Clean Livestock Guide. The FSA has also published research to assess the significance of intervention methods to reduce the microbiological load on beef through primary production.

The key aspects of the MOC and the FSA Clean Livestock Guide are highlighted in this section, further details can be found in the original documents.

## Clean beef cattle for slaughter

It is important that cattle presented for slaughter are clean and dry. This is because faeces and mud on the animal's hide can contaminate meat or the environment of a slaughterhouse when the hide is removed. Further information can be found in the Clean beef cattle for slaughter guidance.

## Hygiene during evisceration and skinning/hide removal

Most of the harmful bacteria in an animal can be found in the intestines and on the hide. The intestines must be removed carefully to avoid the contents being released and contaminating the carcass during the evisceration process. Similarly, the hide of the animal must be removed carefully to avoid contamination.

Steam vacuum can be used to remove minor visible contamination, dirt and hair from the surface of the carcass prior to post-mortem inspection. This must only be used to rectify accidental contamination of carcases and not as a substitute for good hygiene or inadequate dressing practices.

## Surface treatments of the carcass

Suppliers may wish to apply treatments to the surface of the meat that reduce levels of contamination, prior to supplying it to catering establishments. Care must be taken to prevent re contamination after treatment, such as hygienic handling and dedicated mincing equipment.

Any surface treatment used must be legally allowed and the requirements in the relevant legislation must be followed. At present, lactic acid and potable water are the only substances that can be used to reduce the contamination on the surface of beef carcases in approved slaughterhouses.

Further information on the use of lactic acid to reduce microbiological surface contamination on bovine carcases can be found in the Manual for Official Controls. (England and Wales) and Manual for Official Controls (VPHP) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI)

## Time limits on meat to be minced

Meat must be minced within a specific time period from the time of slaughter to minimise the potential for the growth of pathogens that might be present on the meat. In the case of beef minced meat produced from chilled meat, this is:

- within no more than six days of slaughter, or
- within no more than 15 days from the date of slaughter of the animals in the case of boned, vacuum-packed beef

## Temperature control

Where possible, mincing should be carried out under temperature control to keep the meat and resulting minced meat at a temperature as low as is practical. As the presence of low numbers of harmful E. coli can cause illness, limiting growth of the bacteria by using low temperatures as a control throughout the mincing process and other processing, handling and storage, is an important safety control. This is because if the temperature rises, the bacteria will grow faster and, if it is present in higher numbers, there is a greater likelihood of the bacteria causing illness. Strict temperature control during any handling, storage and transport will also limit the potential for growth of harmful bacteria.

Temperature control should be reflected in HACCP-based procedures throughout the supply chain to control the hazards of concern and these should be maintained throughout distribution and storage.

## Separation to prevent cross-contamination

The separation of food and equipment, where appropriate, will help to prevent cross-contamination. This includes separation of meat destined to be LTTC from meat which is not, including during preparation, storage, packing and transport. The separation of equipment for use with meat destined to be LTTC and meat that is not will also help to prevent cross-contamination. Strict cleaning and disinfection procedures of equipment, tools and premises must be in place to prevent the build-up of bacteria and avoid cross-contamination. Meat packaged and for transportation to another premises should be stored in a clean, separate area. It must be ensured that outer packaging does not come into direct contact with dirty floors etc. prior to and during storage/transport to another premises. This is particularly important as it will help to prevent bacteria from dirty outer packaging contaminating the meat when opened.

## Personal hygiene for food handlers

Slaughterhouses and meat processing establishments must ensure food handlers follow good hygiene practices such as regular, effective handwashing and wearing appropriate clean protective clothing. This is to minimise the risk of food handlers spreading bacteria.

## Documentation

Suppliers must produce and implement a written HACCP-based FSMS which includes information about how the risks associated with LTTC beef burgers are controlled. Suppliers must specifically identify Salmonella and Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC), and any other relevant pathogens, as particular hazards.

## Legal requirements

The requirement to mince meat within specific times is included in:

- Annex III, Section V, Chapter III 2(b) (i) of Retained Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 for England and Wales
- Annex III, Section V, Chapter III 2(b) (i) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 for Northern Ireland

The requirement to produce and implement a written HACCP-based food safety management system can be found in:

- Article 5 of retained Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene on foodstuffs for England and Wales
- Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene on foodstuffs for Northern Ireland