Great demand for help to manage Listeria in ready-to-eat food

Workshops aimed at supporting manufacturers of ready-to-eat foods develop a *Listeria* management programme has proved so popular that more events have been scheduled.

The series of workshops is being run jointly by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and the New Zealand Institute of Food Safety and Technology (NZIFST). The workshops are aimed at individuals responsible for developing a food business’ *Listeria* management programme.

“We had initially scheduled a series of five workshops in April and one to coincide with the NZIFST conference in July,” MPI animal products advisor Marion Castle says. “However, due to the huge interest and the great feedback from the participants that came along to last month’s workshops, we’ve added another four dates.”

The new workshops are scheduled for Auckland (17 and 18 June), Christchurch (19 June) and Invercargill (20 June).

*Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria can cause a serious illness called listeriosis. Ready-to-eat products, such as deli meats and salads, cooked poultry products, smoked seafoods, soft cheeses and foods with a long refrigerated shelf life are often linked to outbreaks of *Listeria*. Once food is contaminated with Listeria the bacteria multiply quickly, even at the recommended refrigeration temperatures of 2 - 4°C.

The workshops aim to provide practical information about the foodborne bacteria, the sources, pathways and the key controls to minimise the contamination of ready-to-eat foods, as well as verification of the controls by developing an environmental and product sampling plan.

They build on MPI’s reference material “Guidance for the control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods”, which is available from MPI’s website.

While it’s free to attend the workshops, participants need to sign up in advance as numbers are limited and registrations cannot be accepted on the day.

For more information on dates and venues, and to secure a place at one of the workshops please contact Rosemary Hancock at rosemary@nzifst.org.nz

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