

M&S

EST. 1884



M&S' FIVE POINT PLAN

LEADING THE INDUSTRY IN TACKLING THE CAMPYLOBACTER CHALLENGE
FEBRUARY 2015

THE CAMPYLOBACTER CHALLENGE

Campylobacter in chicken hit the headlines last year. Its presence in poultry was not news itself, the news was that the Food Standards Agency (FSA) had made it its number one priority and was calling on retailers to take action. Concerned that campylobacter levels in chickens were not improving, the FSA set the industry a target of fewer than one-in-ten chickens having the highest levels of the bug by the end of 2015.

Campylobacter is a naturally occurring bacteria and rarely

causes illness. Consumers can avoid food poisoning by following on-pack cooking, handling and storage advice.



M&S had already been making it even easier for our customers for many years with initiatives such as leak proof packaging

and labelling every chicken with a specific cooking time based on its weight. But to produce a step-change in campylobacter presence in M&S chickens, we had to innovate.

The M&S team took on the challenge to create a ground breaking programme that would not only protect customers, but significantly reduce levels of campylobacter in the supply chain.

THE PLAN

Our team joined with our biggest poultry supplier – 2 Sisters Food Group – and began to research and test ways to make an impact. From work we'd undertaken over the past few years we knew there was not one, silver bullet intervention that would reduce campylobacter.

Action had to be taken throughout the supply chain, from farms right through to customer homes.

By the end of September, we were ready to trial five initiatives.



1. FARMER BONUS



A bonus scheme for farmers that produce 'campylobacter free' farms. This is intended to stop the spread of the bacteria by incentivising farmers to strictly control access to the farms and chicken houses.

2. ZERO THINNING



We asked M&S farmers that supply to 2 Sisters to take part in a trial. This is ongoing and involves them stopping part harvesting chickens from flocks through the growing cycle, known in the industry as operating a 'zero thinning' policy. It is believed this will help maintain farm biosecurity throughout the life of the chicken, potentially reducing levels of campylobacter and delivering animal welfare benefits.

3. BLAST SURFACE CHILLING



We invested in new technology on a dedicated M&S processing line that rapidly chills whole chickens. The system circulates air at minus 90 degrees which is enough to make the chickens passing through the machine very cold without freezing them. Low temperatures help to reduce levels of campylobacter.

4. CLEAR LABELLING



We made front of pack labelling on M&S whole chickens even clearer for customers, adding a large, front-of-pack label that says "Washed and Ready to Cook". Washing chickens is not necessary and splashing water can spread campylobacter.

5. DOUBLE BAGGING



We introduced a 'double bag' for M&S chickens which means they can be placed straight into the oven in a bag. The customer doesn't need to unwrap the product pre-cooking, reducing the risk of cross contamination in the kitchen.

THE RESULTS

By November we could see signs that the five trial interventions were working as an integrated, farm to customer home approach and the decision was taken to expand it further across the M&S / 2 Sisters supply chain. The Five Point Plan was born, an integrated approach that ensures the highest possible standards, incorporates new technology and makes it as easy as possible for our customers.

Test results since mid-November have seen a step change improvement. Before the Five Point Plan was expanded, 11 per cent of M&S chickens (average figure from August to October test results) had the highest levels of campylobacter. That number has dropped to five per cent (average figure from mid-November to

January test results), more than halving the rate and significantly below the FSA target for the end of 2015.

The Five Point Plan has the backing of the FSA. Its policy team has been kept informed throughout the process and we've shared results with them. Steve Wearne, the FSA's Director of Policy, said:

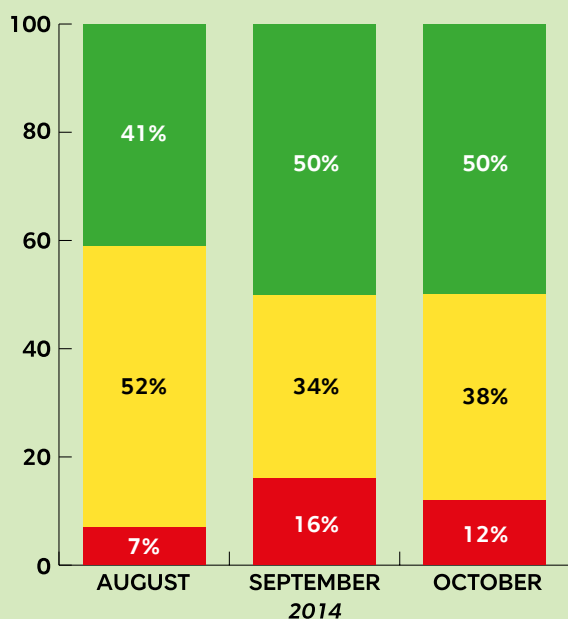
“This is a really exciting development in the fight against campylobacter. We have always said that there is no single intervention that will tackle campylobacter, instead it is the type of structured and targeted interventions put in place by M&S and 2 Sisters that will be the key to tackling the problem. We are greatly encouraged by the work they are doing and are pleased to see the

excellent results announced today.

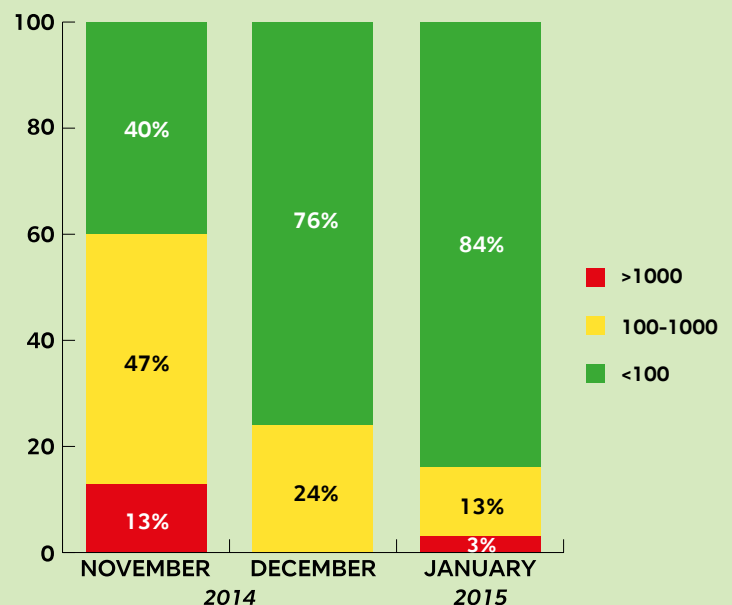
“M&S and 2 Sisters have shown what can be done and we would urge all retailers who sell fresh chicken to take similar steps and play their part in reducing campylobacter and food poisoning across the country.”

The Five Point Plan is a transformational plan that is leading the industry, no other retailer is implementing a holistic programme of its type on a commercial scale. We take food safety extremely seriously and are committed to monitoring and further improving it. Acting with integrity in our supply chain is a business priority, it's one of the values that makes M&S food different.

M&S CAMPYLOBACTER RESULTS BEFORE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIVE POINT PLAN



M&S CAMPYLOBACTER RESULTS AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIVE POINT PLAN



Methodology – based on a total sample of 336 M&S chickens. The tests are carried out by FSA approved independent testing laboratory Campden BRI. The chickens tested are taken at random from the shelves of M&S stores across the UK.