

The 10 most important questions that every business manager in the meat industry asks:

We have the answers....

1. Is there a reliable and cost-effective rapid test for determining the total viable count (TVC) in meat?

Yes, a rapid test is now available that for the first time enables companies to detect the TVC along the entire meat processing and handling chain, with accuracy comparable to lab-based tests and with virtually no on-going costs for the device. This combination of immediate results, cost-effective measurements and high degree of accuracy provides new opportunities to optimize workflows at every step of the process, while creating a wide range of opportunities to reduce costs. Last but not least, end consumers benefit through safer and higher quality food products.

2. Where can the rapid tests be used?

Because the measurements are cost-effective, fast and accurate, this method can essentially be used wherever there is a need to determine the total viable count in meat. Slaughter and cutting facilities can utilize it along the entire meat processing chain, where it can serve as a tool for drawing conclusions about hygiene conditions, or to substantiate hygiene analyses and management decisions. By utilizing the method in the receiving area, companies can immediately identify poor quality products that have to be rejected or to determine the best way to process the meat. With minimal on-going costs, the rapid tests can be used to analyze a large percentage of the delivered products. And in the shipping area, they provide a quality guarantee when handing the product over to the customer.

3. What tangible added value do I receive through a rapid test?

With vastly transparent and real-time quality control along the entire processing chain, all participants benefit from measurements that are available within a matter of seconds. Slaughter and meat packing operations can detect the TVC at every step of the process, optimize their workflows, analyze quality in the shipping area

and avoid cross-contamination. The tests furthermore allow companies to make decisions based on quality at every step, such as determining whether to extend the best by date or deciding whether to process a particular product into pre-boiled or raw sausage. Food retailers and the gastronomy industry can rely on the tests to analyze products as they are received and immediately notify suppliers of potential issues. For inspection authorities, the rapid tests provide a simple and fast way to analyze a significantly higher number of batches. Finally, the consumer enjoys superior quality, fresh meat products and protection against the health risks of contaminated or spoiled food.

4. How can I analyze and optimize my production workflows?

By implementing rapid tests along the entire process chain, production workflows can be optimized to the benefit of lower production costs for the manufacturer and better product quality for the end consumer.

5. How can I quickly and cost-effectively avoid fines or damage to the company's reputation because of hygiene regulation violations?

Since government-stipulated tests are often too long and cumbersome, rapid tests serve as a valuable tool, so that companies can now test the quality of meat directly on-site within seconds along the entire processing chain.

6. How can I efficiently install a new production line or retrofit an existing one?

To date, companies have been forced to establish several "test days" each quarter in order to analyze the microbiological condition of the products over the course of one production day. Relying on existing laboratory methods to determine the TVC quickly drives up costs, which can be significantly reduced by utilizing the new rapid tests.

7. Can a complete palette be cost-effectively analyzed in the receiving area?

A 4 X 8 X 20 palette of meat, where each box contains 20 cuts of meat, would yield a total of 640 cuts. Testing three boxes, or 60 cuts of meat, would equate to testing roughly 10 percent of the palette. At a cost of between €5 and €10 to test each sample, this leads to a total cost of between €300 and €600 to analyze one palette. If a truck delivers 15 to 32 palettes, the costs to analyze the microbiological quality of 10 percent of one shipment can run between €4,500 and €19,000. The vast majority of these costs can be avoided by using rapid measurements that supply results within seconds.

8. How can the high costs of storage cooling be reduced?

Rapid tests can be used to determine how product quality is impacted when cooling temperatures are modified for instance. Although microbiological tests can be used here, they come with high costs since multiple measurements are needed to develop a statistically-relevant assessment. Furthermore, because certain rapid test methods are non-invasive, the product is not damaged during testing and thus loses no value.

9. Is there a nondestructive way to analyze the quality of meat during processing?

Products are removed from the production line several times a day in order to analyze them. Since these products cannot be returned to the production line without determining the bacterial burden, they are frequently collected and then disposed of at a later point. With rapid tests however, the products can be tested to determine the microbiological quality and then processed further if the results of the test are satisfactory.

10. Apart from price, how can I make my offer more attractive than the competition when vying for a retailer's business?

Roughly 10 percent of all food products are discarded by retailers because the specified best by date has expired, even though the quality is not in question. Apart from creating a large quantity of waste, retailers suffer financial losses as a result. With rapid tests in the shipping area or at the store, the microbiological condition of the products can be tested and the best by date extended accordingly.



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