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FOURTEENTH UPDATE ON LISTERIOSIS OUTBREAK IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Dr Lucia Anelich

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The [NICD](#) has provided the latest update on the listeriosis outbreak in South Africa – attached to this note as at 20 April 2018. We are at **1019** confirmed cases and at the threshold of 200 deaths, with **199 deaths**. What remains worrying is the number of deaths for children aged 1 month -14 years; these numbered 7 deaths on 08 March. I have written to the NICD on now five occasions asking for clarification as to whether there were underlying health issues or severe malnutrition related to these deaths, but to date have still not received a response.

In summary to date for your convenience:

DATE	CONFIRMED CASES	DEATHS
05 December 2017	550	36
20 December 2017	647	60
03 January 2018	717	61
12 January 2018	748	67
16 January 2018	767	81
25 January 2018	820	82
06 February 2018	852	107
15 February 2018	872	164
20 February 2018	915	172
27 February 2018	945	176
04 March 2018	948	180
08 March 2018	967	183
26 March 2018	982	189
03 April 2018	999	191
13 April 2018	1011	193
20 April 2018	1019	199

Besides the st6 strain, which is the outbreak strain (now in 92% of cases), in the remaining 8% of cases, eleven other strains have been identified by the NICD. These are: ST1, ST2, ST3, ST5, ST8,

ST54, ST101, ST204, ST219, ST224, ST876. The WHO commented in March that these multiple strains may be an indication that more than one outbreak is ongoing.

Listeria monocytogenes is found **naturally** in the environment; one can therefore **realistically** expect its presence in **low numbers** in **raw food commodities** including raw poultry and raw meat. This is nothing new - it has been present in these commodities for decades and many countries which have a long history with listeriosis, understand that it is unrealistic to expect raw meats to be completely free of *L. monocytogenes*. Raw foods are not sterile i.e. they are not totally free of all microbial life and neither is it a realistic expectation. It is therefore more important to focus on controlling the organism so that it does not become a **risk to human health**. This includes amongst other things, understanding the behaviour of *L. monocytogenes* in food and in a food processing environment, and developing appropriate risk mitigation strategies.

Prevention of **post-processing contamination** of food in a manufacturing facility remains key, particularly after a product is cooked, meaning that it received a listericidal treatment (kill step). *L. monocytogenes* is known to be persistent in the environment of some facilities and could therefore be a consistent source of post-processing contamination. A **robust** environmental control programme is vital, which would include an **effective** cleaning and disinfection regime, amongst other control measures.

Further information resources:

1. This communique, further information on listeriosis and some interviews conducted can be found on the Anelich Consulting website at www.anelichconsulting.co.za and by clicking on links provided;
2. See <http://anelichconsulting.co.za/index.php/faq> for regularly updated answers to Frequently Asked Questions.
3. I recently launched a new website specifically designed to provide science-based facts on listeriosis for the consumer. See www.listeriosisfacts.co.za.

Contact me at la@anelichconsulting.co.za for further assistance and scientific advice based on international best practice.

This communique may be distributed only in its entirety reflecting the Anelich Consulting logo. If any of the above-mentioned information is extracted and used (other than NICD information already published) the author Dr Lucia Anelich must be acknowledged.

NEW course launched!

***Listeria monocytogenes* – all you need to know to control it in your processing plant and how to establish appropriate microbiological criteria based on risk. Click [here](#) for more information. Shorter presentations are available for top management.**