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Testing a new method to reduce *E. coli* in beef

A new method to reduce *E. coli* and potential pathogenic bacteria in beef is this week undergoing further testing at the JBS abattoir at Scone, New South Wales.

A team of Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) food safety researchers are working with industry to develop a solution that will enhance food safety for the red meat sector.

"We have found through our laboratory and pilot trials that spraying beef carcasses with oxidant and water during refrigeration, a process known as spray-chilling, causes significant reductions in *E. coli* numbers and helps maintain meat weight," TIA Research Fellow Dr Jay Kocharunchitt said.

"Most types of *E. coli* are harmless, however pathogenic *E. coli* are a risk to public health so there is no tolerance for them in some export markets.

"We are working with industry to ensure our research contributes to solving real problems, and with help from JBS, we are testing our method further."

Dr Kocharunchitt said the trial builds on tests carried out earlier this year at the JBS abattoir at Longford.

"In an earlier trial, we captured microbiological data that gave us a baseline, which we have used to design the current trial at JBS's abattoir," he said.

"This trial will clarify the next steps to develop this method for commercial use."

Michael Johnston, JBS Group Food Safety Quality Assurance Manager, said JBS had invested in new technology needed to carry out the collaborative two-month trial.

"We're working with TIA to ensure we keep up with the latest in microbiological research and development, which is of benefit to the Australian red meat industry," Mr Johnston said.

TIA is a Principal Research Organisation for Microbial Ecology and Physiology (PROMEPE). The group's research is jointly administered and funded by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) with financial support from the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC).

TIA is a joint venture of the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government.

For more information visit blogs.utas.edu.au/promep.

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