



# How to Minimise the Risk of Leakage of Potentially Contaminated Juices from Fresh Poultry Products

## Introduction

A survey by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland found that 13% of the external surfaces of packaging of fresh chicken products sampled in retail shops and 11% of the surface of display cabinets were contaminated with *Campylobacter* species, the most common cause of bacterial gastroenteritis in Ireland.

Packaging specifically designed to be leak-proof is the best way to ensure that juices from fresh whole birds, fillets and pieces (which have a high likelihood of containing this foodborne pathogen) do not leak from packaging and contaminate ready-to-eat foods. However, while retailers are working on changing their packaging, there are a number of measures which can be taken by retail staff to minimise the risk of leakage.

**This factsheet presents advice on ways in which retailers can minimise the risk of leakage. However, it is up to each retailer to raise awareness of this problem among staff and to decide how best to manage this risk through its food safety management system.**

## Receipt and Storage

- Poultry products should preferably be supplied packed flat to prevent leakage.
- Deliveries should be checked to ensure packaging is intact and there is no leakage.
- Where problems occur, suppliers should be contacted.
- Poultry products should preferably be stored flat at all times during storage and display.

## Cleaning

- When cleaning, it is important to ensure that the correct dilutions of chemicals are used (follow in-store cleaning procedure or manufacturer's instructions).
- Poultry display shelves should be checked and cleaned and sanitised as necessary, throughout the day.
- Due to the extra weight of turkeys, shelves displaying these whole birds may need to be checked for leakage more often than other poultry products.

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## Display

- Only poultry products with intact packaging should be displayed for sale.
- Staff should check for the following:
  - Torn packaging
  - Loose wrapping
  - Exposed poultry flesh
  - Obvious leakage
- Poultry products with damaged packaging and/or obvious leakage should only be displayed for sale if they are wrapped in cling film.
- If checks reveal an ongoing problem with a product, the supplier should be informed.
- Whenever possible, display all poultry on the flat and not in an upright position to lessen the chance of leakage.
- Ideally, whole birds should be displayed in single layers and not stacked on each other.
- Poultry products should be physically separated from other products (e.g. by use of dividers).

## Protecting Staff and Consumers

Each retailer should consider how it can best protect its staff and customers. Possible options include:

- Providing a roll of plastic deli bags at the poultry shelves with a sign telling the customers '*Please use free bags provided for poultry products*'. This would allow customers to separate the poultry from the other products. In addition, these bags are conducive to scanning at the checkouts and would therefore remove the need for checkout staff to handle potentially contaminated poultry packaging. However, these free plastic bags have a set maximum size under S.I. No. 605 of 2001 and therefore, may not be big enough for large poultry products.
- Putting signage at the poultry display area advising customers to '*In the interest of food safety, separate raw poultry from other food items*'
- Make sure checkout staff are aware of the risk and ensure that if juices leak from poultry packaging at the checkout, the spillage is cleaned and sanitised immediately

**Retailers should ensure that the risk of leakage of potentially contaminated juices from fresh chicken products is addressed in their food safety management systems.**