Consumer behavior when shopping for and storing poultry may result in cross-contamination

Consumers (96 total) observed while shopping demonstrated behaviors that could lead to cross-contamination of poultry microbes

Setup
Conducted in 3 locations:
Kansas City, KS; Manhattan, KS; Nashville, TN
Respondents:
96 participants, primary shoppers and poultry buyers
Researchers:
Each organization went through a 6 hour workshop to ensure that data was collected in a uniform way

Findings
Consumer behaviors could lead to cross-contamination
In the store:
• Only ¼ of consumers bagged their poultry selections
• Only 3 of 96 consumers used hand sanitizer in the meat section
• Majority of consumers touched cart immediately after handling poultry (see Figure 1)
• 84% of the consumers place the poultry in the main section of the grocery basket, making contact with non-poultry products common
In the homes:
• 59% of customers stored poultry without it being in a plastic bag which could potentially contaminate the surface in which it is sitting
• 20% of customers stored the poultry in a way where it was in contact with a non-poultry item

Conclusions
• Meat Section – most improvement needed
  • Stores need to provide hand sanitizer or wipes
  • Customers need to be educated to use sanitizer
  • Customers need to be educated on using bags in meat section
• Home Storage – improvement needed
  • Leave poultry in meat bag when storing
  • Goal: decrease contamination of storage surfaces
  • Goal: decrease contamination of other products in storage
• Check-out – minimal improvement needed
  • A good job is being done to bag poultry separately