

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

Amy Donelan¹, Delores Chambers¹, Sandra Godwin², Edgar Chambers IV¹, Sheryl Cates³
¹Kansas State University ²Tennessee State University

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

Items touched after handling poultry

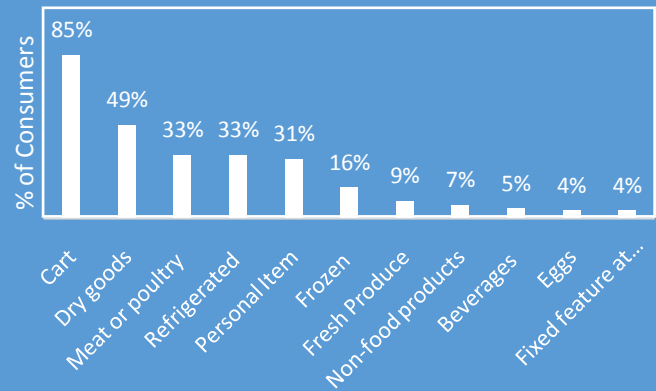


Figure 1 Percent of consumers that touched each type of product directly after touching poultry

Poultry storage at home

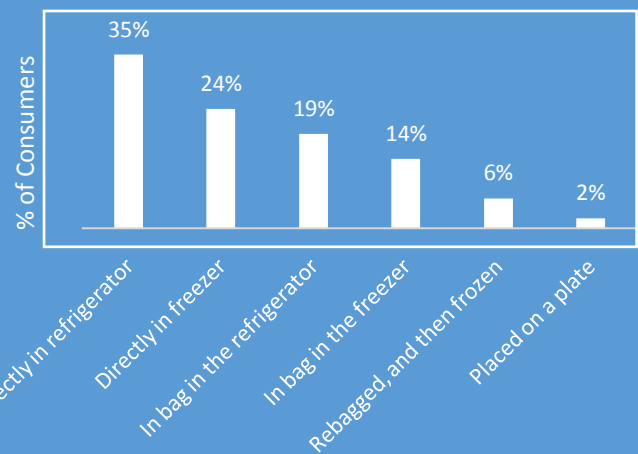


Figure 2 Methods used by consumers to store poultry at home