



## **CUTTING OUT CROSS-CONTAMINATION**



# PREVENTING CROSS-CONTAMINATION IN MEAT PROCESSING FACILITIES



Cross-contamination risk is a major concern in the food supply chain. The transfer of potentially deadly bacteria, viruses or other toxic substances from contaminated foodstuffs or surfaces can have catastrophic outcomes, so minimising the likelihood through adherence to solid food safety practices is essential. These risks are especially prevalent in processing environments including meat production, wherein the base product is a common carrier of bacteria, and therefore demands that adequate preventative measures be in place.

## Understanding cross-contamination

There are four main causes of cross-contamination.

- **Biological** – occurs when food becomes contaminated by humans, animals, bacteria, viruses or microorganisms through poor food safety practices and processes, which can lead to foodborne illness.
- **Chemical** – occurs when food is contaminated by toxic chemicals, which leads to chemical food poisoning.
- **Physical** – occurs when a foreign body or object enters foodstuffs during the production or preparation process, leading to biological contamination risk as well as being a choking hazard.
- **Allergen** – occurs when trace amounts of allergens are transferred to foods during processing, posing a significant risk for consumers with food allergies.

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# STEMMING THE SOURCE

**The meat processing supply chain is susceptible to cross-contamination risk via multiple channels. The inherent presence of bacteria and other pathogens within the raw material itself immediately introduces risk of biological contamination if meat products are intermingled before, during or after slaughter. Product-to-product contact or repeated contact with common processing surfaces, including operator's hands, will quickly lead to cross-contamination.**

Additional biological contamination risks are introduced in the transportation process if implemented cold chain management measures are inadequate, potentially facilitating bacterial growth.

Chemical and physical cross-contamination are also real possibilities – metal shavings introduced through poorly maintained or handled processing machinery pose risk, as does the presence of pesticides and chemicals used in operations. Allergen cross-contamination can occur at any point including processing, packaging, transport or storage.

Despite the prevalence of multiple potential hazards at every step in the chain, most instances of cross-contamination are entirely preventable provided a thorough quality system that incorporates good manufacturing practices is in place.

**“Most instances of cross-contamination are entirely preventable”**





# THE BEST PROTECTION IS PREVENTION



That system will incorporate provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) including suitable hand protection solutions. In meat processing environments, 'suitable' means gloves that offer defence against a range of risk criteria including the following.

**Cut resistance** – a major requirement in meat processing environments, cut resistant gloves should be manufactured from a material that offers appropriate defence while still providing flexibility, movement and dexterity, allowing the wearer to carry out common tasks unimpeded and lessening the likelihood of removal and corresponding heightened injury risk.

**Thermal protection** – the chosen solution must offer protection from the typically cold work environment that a meat processing facility presents. Gloves should provide protection from the ambient conditions, as well as from direct contact with cold or wet meat products.

**Grip** – poor grip is often the root cause of hand injury. An inability to sufficiently grip tools and operate machinery as required – especially in the presence of challenging environmental conditions – can lead to slips (that increase the likelihood of cut or puncture injury), strains (through excessive force exertion), stress, fatigue and musculoskeletal complaints.

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Cut resistance glove offers appropriate defence while still providing flexibility, movement and dexterity

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# MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Especially important in the meat processing industry, safety gloves must be constructed from a material that permits thorough cleaning, ensuring that biological cross-contamination risks are eliminated, particularly when working with raw products.

Today's high tech cut resistant materials are designed to protect the hands from cuts and nicks, while still allowing the movement, dexterity and additional protection necessary to conduct supplementary food safety practices including washing of utensils and other equipment.

“ Safety gloves must be constructed from a material that permits thorough cleaning ”

Ansell's wide range of high-quality food compliant protection solutions helps manage and prevent cross-contamination risk across the entire food production chain. Featuring the most advanced material technologies, our protection solutions are certified safe for food contact and adhere to industry and government compliance requirements, enabling workers to carry out tasks knowing that safety is truly in their hands.



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