

ATTACHMENT 3

Occurrence of Bacteria in Dishcloths Used in Restaurants and Survival of Respiratory Viruses on Produce

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Pg 35

Greater numbers of bacteria were found on tabletops that had been cleaned with a dishcloth than before cleaning (Fig.1.5.3). Approximately 3.56×10^3 cfu/156 cm² heterotrophic plate count bacteria were found before cleaning. This number increased to 1.6×10^5 cfu/156 cm² (45-fold increase) after the tables were wiped down with a dishcloth. Likewise, the numbers increased for total coliforms (4.9 to 92.2 cfu/156 cm²) and E. coli (< 1 to 2.3 cfu/156 cm²) following cleaning.

Pg 42

Although this study was fairly small, it raises several interesting questions. For instance, although the bacterial numbers found in food service establishments were lower than the number found in homes, considerable numbers of coliforms and E. coli were still present. This could represent a danger to the public, especially for populations at risk including the very young, the elderly and the immunocompromised. Also, because the bacterial numbers found on tabletops after wiping with a cloth were higher than the numbers prior to cleaning, the use of such cloths in restaurants and bars could contribute to contamination of surfaces and to the spread of potentially harmful bacteria. Therefore, more careful monitoring of linen sanitization solutions used by food service establishments such as restaurants and bars might be called for