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English Version

Microbiology of the food chain - Horizontal method for the
detection and enumeration of Clostridium spp. - Part 3:
Detection of Clostridium perfringens (ISO/TS 15213-
3:2024)

Microbiologie de la chaîne alimentaire - Méthode
horizontale pour la recherche et le dénombrement de
Clostridium spp. - Partie 3: Recherche de Clostridium
perfringens (ISO/TS 15213-3:2024)

Mikrobiologie der Lebensmittelkette - Horizontales
Verfahren zum Nachweis und zur Zählung von
Clostridium spp. - Teil 3: Nachweis von Clostridium
perfringens (ISO/TS 15213-3:2024)

This Technical Specification (CEN/TS) was approved by CEN on 6 February 2024 for provisional application.

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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDIZATION
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European foreword

This document (CEN ISO/TS 15213-3:2024) has been prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34 "Food products" in collaboration with Technical Committee CEN/TC 463 "Microbiology of the food chain" the secretariat of which is held by AFNOR.

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Endorsement notice

The text of ISO/TS 15213-3:2024 has been approved by CEN as CEN ISO/TS 15213-3:2024 without any modification.

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34, *Food products*, Subcommittee SC 9, *Microbiology*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/TC 463, *Microbiology of the food chain*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

A list of all parts in the ISO 15213 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Clostridium (C.) perfringens is a gram-positive, anaerobic, spore-forming bacterium. As a ubiquitous bacterium, *C. perfringens* is predominantly found in soil, but also in the intestinal tract of humans and animals. Therefore, the presence of *C. perfringens* in high numbers can be an indication of inadequate preparation or handling of food.

High numbers of *C. perfringens* in ready-to-eat-food can cause human illness, mainly diarrhoea. The strains are classified into toxin types, depending on the ability to produce different so called “major” and “minor” toxins. Food poisonings related to *C. perfringens* are mostly caused by *C. perfringens* isolates with the ability to produce *C. perfringens* enterotoxin (CPE).

A characteristic feature is the heat resistance of the spores; they have the ability to germinate and multiply in ready-to-eat food after the cooking process. Ingestion of contaminated food is followed by gastrointestinal disease, when enzyme-resistant *C. perfringens* enterotoxins are set free during sporulation in the small intestine. The strains are classified into different types.

This document describes the horizontal method for the detection of *C. perfringens* in food, feed, environmental samples and samples from the primary production stage. The method for the enumeration of sulfite-reducing *Clostridium* spp. is described in ISO 15213-1 and ISO 15213-2 describes the method for the enumeration of *C. perfringens*. These three parts are published as a series of International Standards because the methods are closely linked to each other. These methods are often conducted in association with each other in a laboratory.

Microbiology of the food chain — Horizontal method for the detection and enumeration of *Clostridium* spp. —

Part 3: Detection of *Clostridium perfringens*

WARNING — In order to safeguard the health of laboratory personnel, it is essential that tests for the detection of *Clostridium perfringens* are only undertaken in properly equipped laboratories, under the control of a skilled microbiologist, and that great care is taken in the disposal of all incubated materials. Persons using this document should be familiar with normal laboratory practice. This document does not purport to address all of the safety aspects, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user to establish appropriate safety and health practices.

1 Scope

This document specifies the detection of *Clostridium* (*C.*) *perfringens*.

This document is applicable to:

- products intended for human consumption;
- products intended for animal feeding;
- environmental samples in the area of food and feed production and handling;
- samples from the primary production stage.

This horizontal method was originally developed for the examination of all samples belonging to the food chain. Based on the information available at the time of publication of this document, this method is considered to be fully suited to the examination of all samples belonging to the food chain. However, because of the large variety of products in the food chain, it is possible that this horizontal method is not appropriate in every detail for all products. Nevertheless, it is expected that the required modifications are minimized so that they do not result in a significant deviation from this horizontal method.

NOTE Interlaboratory studies with a small number of participating laboratories (<10) were conducted for the following food categories:

- ready-to-eat, ready-to-reheat meat products;
- eggs and egg products (derivates);
- ready-to-eat, ready-to-reheat fishery products;
- processed fruits and vegetables;
- infant formula and infant cereals (with probiotics);
- multi-component foods or meal components.

It has also been validated with a small number of participating laboratories for the following other category:

- environmental samples (food or feed production).

Since the method is not commonly used for samples in the primary production stage, this category was not included in the interlaboratory study. Therefore, no performance characteristics were obtained for this category. The method has not been validated for the category 'pet food and animal feed', as the test samples used for the interlaboratory study were already naturally contaminated with *C. perfringens*. Given the limited number of participating laboratories in the interlaboratory studies, the calculated performance characteristics can be used as indicative values of the method performance. For detailed information on the validation, see [Clause 11](#) and [Annexes C to F](#).

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 6887 (all parts), *Microbiology of the food chain — Preparation of test samples, initial suspension and decimal dilutions for microbiological examination*

ISO 7218, *Microbiology of the food chain — General requirements and guidance for microbiological examinations*

ISO 11133, *Microbiology of food, animal feed and water — Preparation, production, storage and performance testing of culture media*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

presumptive *C. perfringens*

presumptive *Clostridium perfringens*

spore-forming bacteria forming typical colonies on a specific selective medium under obligate anaerobic conditions

Note 1 to entry: Presumptive *C. perfringens* are spore-forming bacteria that are able to produce typical colonies under the conditions specified in this document.

3.2

confirmed *C. perfringens*

confirmed *Clostridium perfringens*

bacteria that produce characteristic colonies on the specified selective medium under obligate anaerobic conditions and either possess the enzyme acid phosphatase, or are able to produce sulfite, are not able to produce indole and are not motile (SIM agar)

3.3

human pathogenic *C. perfringens*

human pathogenic *Clostridium perfringens*

confirmed *C. perfringens* (3.2) strains which possess the ability to produce *C. perfringens* enterotoxin (CPE), encoded by the *cpe* gene

Note 1 to entry: The *cpe* gene can be located either chromosomally or on large plasmids. These isolates are able to produce CPE in the small intestine on sporulation and cause human illness.