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17.5.10

AOAC Official Method 2003.11
Enumeration of *Staphylococcus aureus*
in Selected Meat, Seafood, and Poultry
3M™ Petrifilm™ Staph Express Count Plate Method
First Action 2003
Final Action 2007

(Applicable to the enumeration of *S. aureus* in cooked and diced chicken, ham, salmon, and pepperoni.)

Caution: Autoclave materials after use.

See Table 2003.11 for the results of the interlaboratory study supporting acceptance of the method.

A. Principle

The Petrifilm Staph Express Count plate is a sample-ready culture medium system which contains a cold-water-soluble gelling agent. The chromogenic, modified Baird-Parker medium in the plate is selective and differential for *S. aureus*. Diluted test portions are added at a volume of 1.0 mL per plate. The gelling agent is allowed to solidify after inoculation, and the plate is then incubated for 24 h at 35 °C or 37 °C. Red-violet colonies on the plate are *S. aureus*. When only red-violet colonies are present, count the colonies; the test is complete.

If background flora are encountered in testing, the Petrifilm Staph Express disk is used to identify *S. aureus* from all suspect colonies. Use the Petrifilm Staph Express disk whenever colonies other than red-violet are present on the plate, for example, black colonies or blue-green colonies. The Petrifilm Staph Express disk contains a dye and deoxyribonucleic acid. *S. aureus* produces deoxyribonuclease (DNase), which reacts with the dye to form pink zones. The disk is inserted into the plate, and the plate and disk are

then incubated for a minimum of 1 h and a maximum of 3 h at 35 °C or 37 °C. *S. aureus* (and occasionally, *S. hyicus* and *S. intermedius*, which can produce enterotoxins) produce a pink zone. Count the pink zones as *S. aureus*, regardless of the size of the zone.

B. Apparatus and Reagents

(a) *3M Petrifilm Staph Express Count plate*.—Plates, available from 3M Microbiology (3M Center Bldg, 275-5W-05, St. Paul, MN 55144, USA), contain chromogenic modified Baird-Parker medium and a cold-water-soluble gelling agent.

(b) *3M Petrifilm Staph Express disk*.—Disks, available from 3M Microbiology, contain toluidine blue-O and DNA.

(c) *Plastic spreader*.—Spreader with handle, available from 3M Microbiology, has a smooth flat side and is designed to spread the test suspension evenly over plate growth area.

(d) *Pipets*.—Calibrated 1.0 and 10.0 mL serological pipets with 0.1 mL graduations. 3M™ Electronic Pipettor and tips, or equivalent, may be used to deliver 1.0 mL. Do not use pipets to deliver <10% of their total volume. For example, to deliver 1 mL, do not use pipet >10 mL; to deliver 0.1 mL, do not use pipet > 1 mL.

(e) *Colony counter*.—Standard apparatus, Quebec Model, available from many suppliers, or one providing equivalent magnification and visibility.

(f) *Sodium hydroxide solution*.—Sterile 1M. Dissolve 40 g NaOH in 1 L water. Prepare and store in glass, screw-cap bottle. Autoclave 15 min at 121 °C.

(g) *Phosphate-buffered dilution water*.—(1) *Stock solution*.—Dissolve 34 g KH₂PO₄ in 500 mL H₂O, adjust to pH 7.2 with ca 175 mL 1M NaOH, and dilute to 1 L. Store in refrigerator. (2) *Diluent*.—Dilute 1.25 mL stock solution to 1 L with H₂O. Prepare

Table 2003.11. Interlaboratory study results of 3M™ Petrifilm™ Staph Express Count plate and Baird-Parker agar for detection of *S. aureus* in foods

| Food | Level | Petrifilm Staph Express Count plate | | | | | | | | Baird-Parker agar | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------|----------------|----------------------|------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|------|----------------|----------------------|------|
| | | N ^a | Mean ^b | s _r | RSD _r , % | r | s _R | RSD _R , % | R | N ^a | Mean ^b | s _r | RSD _r , % | r | s _R | RSD _R , % | R |
| Chicken | Low | 3 | 2.82 | 0.03 ^c | 1.90 | 0.15 | 0.15 | 5.38 | 0.42 | 10 | 2.75 | 0.17 | 6.30 | 0.48 | 0.32 | 11.80 | 0.91 |
| | Med ^d | 10 | 3.86 | 0.08 ^c | 2.22 | 0.24 | 0.13 | 3.32 | 0.36 | 11 | 3.62 | 0.16 | 4.46 | 0.45 | 0.50 | 13.91 | 1.40 |
| | Med+ ^e | 9 | 4.89 | 0.07 ^c | 1.35 | 0.18 | 0.10 | 1.95 | 0.27 | 9 | 4.80 | 0.15 | 3.13 | 0.42 | 0.27 | 5.54 | 0.74 |
| Ham | Low | 10 | 2.86 | 0.09 | 3.23 | 0.26 | 0.25 | 8.70 | 0.70 | 9 | 2.93 | 0.07 | 2.33 | 0.19 | 0.32 | 10.85 | 0.89 |
| | Med | 9 | 3.88 | 0.05 ^c | 1.30 | 0.14 | 0.24 | 6.04 | 0.66 | 10 | 3.82 | 0.16 | 4.16 | 0.44 | 0.47 | 12.37 | 1.32 |
| | Med+ | 10 | 4.87 | 0.10 | 2.13 | 0.29 | 0.22 | 4.62 | 0.63 | 10 | 4.83 | 0.10 | 2.02 | 0.27 | 0.43 | 8.97 | 1.21 |
| Salmon | Low | 8 | 2.55 | 0.10 | 3.92 | 0.28 | 0.17 | 6.56 | 0.47 | 10 | 2.51 | 0.13 | 5.34 | 0.38 | 0.20 | 7.84 | 0.55 |
| | Med | 7 | 3.46 | 0.14 | 3.98 | 0.38 | 0.18 | 5.22 | 0.50 | 12 | 3.46 | 0.12 | 3.40 | 0.33 | 0.32 | 9.18 | 0.89 |
| | Med+ | 8 | 4.45 | 0.13 | 2.88 | 0.36 | 0.32 | 7.20 | 0.90 | 12 | 4.29 | 0.12 | 2.78 | 0.33 | 0.42 | 9.80 | 1.18 |
| Pepperoni | Low | NA ^f | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Med | 9 | 1.81 | 0.07 ^c | 3.83 | 0.19 | 0.21 | 11.47 | 0.58 | 11 | 1.93 | 0.19 | 9.96 | 0.54 | 0.30 | 15.43 | 0.83 |
| | Med+ | 8 | 3.71 | 0.04 | 1.00 | 0.10 | 0.18 | 4.93 | 0.51 | 11 | 3.68 | 0.08 | 2.29 | 0.24 | 0.35 | 9.45 | 0.97 |

^a Number of laboratories used in the analysis after the outlier tests and removal of those with *S. aureus* in the uninoculated control samples.

^b Log₁₀ *S. aureus* count/g.

^c Significantly better repeatability ($p < 0.05$).

^d Med = Medium level of inoculation with *S. aureus*.

^e Med+ = Medium level of inoculation with *S. aureus* plus inoculation with background organism (*E. faecalis*).

^f NA = No *S. aureus* colonies were detected as the inoculation level was missed.

dilution blanks with this solution, dispensing enough to allow for losses during autoclaving. Autoclave 15 min at 121 °C.

(h) *Blender*.—High-speed blender (16 000–18 000 rpm) with sterile jar.

(i) *Incubator*.—Maintaining 35 °C or 37 °C.

(j) *Balance*.—2000 g capacity.

(k) *pH indicator strips*.—To measure a range of 6.0–8.0.

C. Preparation of Test Suspension

Use balance, **B(j)**, to aseptically weigh 50 g test portion into blender jar, **B(h)**. Add 450 mL diluent, **B(g)**, and blend at 16 000–18 000 rpm for 2 min to homogenize. If entire test sample is <50 g, weigh portion of test sample and add dilution water to make a 1:10 dilution. As required, adjust pH of diluted test portion to 6.0–8.0 with 1M NaOH, **B(f)**, (ca 0.1 mL/g test portion). Do not use diluents containing citrate, bisulfite, or thiosulfate as they can inhibit growth. Prepare all decimal dilutions with 90 mL dilution water plus 10 mL from the previous dilution. Pipets, **B(d)**, must accurately deliver the required volume. Mix all dilutions by shaking 25 times through 30 cm arc in 7 s.

D. Analysis

Place Petrifilm Staph Express Count plate, **B(a)**, on flat surface. Lift top film and inoculate 1 mL portion of test suspension onto

center of bottom film. Carefully roll top film down onto inoculum. Distribute test suspension over 30 cm² growth area with downward pressure on handle of plastic spreader, **B(c)**. Leave plate undisturbed to permit gelling agent to solidify. Incubate plates at 35 °C or 37

°C for 24 h. In incubator, **B(i)**, place plate in horizontal position in stacks not exceeding 20 units. Count plates with colony counter, **B(e)**. Observe colony colors. If no colonies or only red-violet colonies are present after 24 h, count red-violet colonies on the plate as *S. aureus*; the test is complete. If any colony colors other than red-violet are present, use a Petrifilm Staph Express disk, **B(b)**.

Insert Petrifilm Staph Express disk into plate. Apply pressure by sliding a gloved finger firmly across the entire disk area (including edges) to ensure uniform contact of disk with gel and to eliminate any air bubbles. Incubate plates and disks, in stacks of no more than 20 units, for at least 60 min and no longer than 3 h at 35 °C or 37

°C. Enumerate pink zones as *S. aureus* whether or not colonies are present. Pink zones are usually associated with *S. aureus* but may indicate *S. hyicus* or *S. intermedius*. Colonies not associated with a pink zone are not *S. aureus* and should not be counted.

Reference: [J. AOAC Int. 86, 947\(2003\)](#).