HAZARD ANALYSIS CRITICAL CONTROL POINT (HACCP) IN A RED MEAT ABATTOIR

By

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I declare that this thesis hereby submitted for the M.Sc. Food Science degree at the University of Pretoria had not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university.

Finally, to the Lord almighty who made it all possible.
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ABSTRACT

HAZARD ANALYSIS CRITICAL CONTROL POINT (HACCP) IN A RED MEAT ABATTOIR

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A hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP) programme was carried out in a class C abattoir in the Hammanskraal region of Pretoria, South Africa to determine whether the implementation of HACCP would minimise pathogens in meat at the abattoir level. The need to find methods to minimise these pathogens is due to the fact that the incidences of food poisoning and food-borne diseases are not declining. In addition, most animals are symptom-less carriers of these pathogens implying that their presence cannot be detected by the classical meat inspection procedures and assumed healthy animals can be a potential health hazard. This work is therefore important as it justifies the potential for use of the HACCP system in small abattoirs bearing in mind that various researchers have found pathogens within the meat chain of South Africa.

The experimental design involved a hygiene evaluation of the plant, a hazard analysis and microbiological analyses. The hygiene evaluation of the plant was carried out to determine whether the abattoir has basic good manufacturing practices in place, a foundation for a HACCP system. Thereafter, by following the processing line step-by-step, a hazard analysis was done to fully comprehend the impact of the slaughtering and hygiene procedures on the microbial loads of the carcasses. A critical control point work sheet was drawn up for the skinning, evisceration and chilling steps.
The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of HACCP on the microbiological status of carcasses. A non-destructive microbiological analysis was carried out on a total of 100 carcasses with 50 forming the baseline data and the other 50 forming the HACCP data. Analyses were done for aerobic plate counts, Staphylococcus aureus, total coliforms, Escherichia coli, Clostridium perfringens, and Salmonella.

The statistical evaluations of the data showed that all variables were significantly reduced (p < 0.01) after HACCP implementation except for the aerobic plate count data and Escherichia coli at splitting of carcass. However, after 24 hours chilling all the pathogens were significantly reduced (p < 0.05). A consistent positive hygiene trend was achieved for all the variables tested. Minimal detections as low as 40% of carcasses at splitting and 2% after 24 hours chilling for Escherichia coli and 14% at splitting and 0% after 24 hours chilling for Clostridium perfringens, were also recorded after HACCP implementation. Salmonella was isolated from only 2% of the carcasses during the baseline data collection at the splitting step. After HACCP implementation all the samples were negative at both the control points.

The main limitation of the study was that most of the personnel within the meat industry were illiterate and therefore training was difficult and took a longer time. The high employee turn-over also calls for constant training and can lead to hygiene fluctuations within the line. The workers remuneration also depended on the number of carcasses they processed hence chain speeds tended to be fairly high and these could compromise the hygiene of the product. Generally, there is also still a lack of minimum microbial standards for meat processing operations using the HACCP system.

The aim of the study, which was focused on reducing pathogen levels in a carcass, was attained. The study can therefore form a basis for implementation of HACCP in small red meat abattoirs in South Africa. However, it is recommended that a further similar study should be done for multiple abattoirs concurrently over a longer duration to get a more comprehensive picture of the South African abattoir industry viz. HACCP.
CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ............................................. 1
  1.1 INTRODUCTION .............................................................................. 1
  1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM ..................................................... 2

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................... 4
  2.1 EPIDEMIOLOGY OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS ASSOCIATED
     WITH RAW BEEF ........................................................................... 4
  2.2 MEAT BACTERIA OF HEALTH CONCERN ....................................... 7
    2.2.1 Enterobactericeae .................................................................. 9
      2.2.1.1 *Escherichia coli* ............................................................... 10
      2.2.1.2 *Salmonella* .................................................................. 10
      2.2.1.3 *Yersinia* ...................................................................... 12
    2.2.2 *Clostridium perfringens* ......................................................... 12
    2.2.3 *Staphylococcus aureus* .......................................................... 13
    2.2.4 *Listeria monocytogenes* ......................................................... 16
  2.3 MICROBIAL CONTAMINATION OF BEEF CARCASSES ................. 16
    2.3.1 Slaughter stock ..................................................................... 17
    2.3.2 Abattoir environment .............................................................. 18
      2.3.2.1 *Plant and equipment* ......................................................... 19
      2.3.2.2 Personnel ....................................................................... 20
      2.3.2.3 Carcass dressing and processing steps ......................... 23
  2.4 MICROBIAL CONTROL .................................................................. 27
    2.4.1 Decontamination .................................................................... 27
    2.4.2 Application of HACCP ............................................................. 29
      2.4.2.1 HACCP control measures .................................................. 29
        2.4.2.1.1 Skinning .................................................................... 31
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2.1.2</td>
<td>Evisceration</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2.1.1</td>
<td>Chilling</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2.2</td>
<td>Benefits of the HACCP in the meat industry</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>Hygiene evaluation</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2</td>
<td>Hazard analysis</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>MICROBIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Collection and treatment of samples</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Reagents and materials</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.1</td>
<td>Buffered peptone water</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.2</td>
<td>Aerobic plate count</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.3</td>
<td>Staphylococci species</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.4</td>
<td>Total coliforms</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.5</td>
<td>Escherichia coli</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.6</td>
<td>Clostridium perfringens</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.7</td>
<td>Salmonella</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.7.1</td>
<td>Pre-enrichment broth</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.7.2</td>
<td>Growth medium</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.7.3</td>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>STATISTICAL ANALYSIS</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>EFFECT OF HACCP ON CARCASS MICROBIAL LOADS</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>EFFECT OF CHILLING ON CARCASS MICROBIAL LOADS...</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION ........................................ 77

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 82

CHAPTER 7: REFERENCES ........................................ 84

APPENDIX

TABLE 2.3 Leading vehicle Foods known for salmonellosis outbreaks in the United States, 1973-1987 (Bean & Griffin, 1990) ........................................ 11

TABLE 2.4 Salmonellosis outbreaks, deaths and deaths traced to foods in the United States, 1983-1987 (Bean et al., 1989) ........................................ 12

TABLE 2.5 Outbreaks, cases and deaths from Clostridium perfringens food borne gastrointestinal illness in the United States, 1983-1987 (Bean et al., 1989) ........................................ 13

TABLE 2.6 Leading food sources for Escherichia coli gastrointestinal outbreaks in the United States, 1973-1997 (Bean & Griffin, 1990) ........................................ 14

TABLE 2.7 Staphylococcal Food-borne Gastroenteritis Outbreaks and Cases in the United States, 1972-1987 (Bean & Griffin, 1990, Bean et al., 1990) ........................................ 15

TABLE 2.8 Leading factors that led to the outbreak of Staphylococcal food-borne gastroenteritis in the United States, 1973-1987 (Bean & Griffin, 1990) ........................................ 15

TABLE 2.9 Generic HACCP plan: Critical Control Points for beef slaughter (NACOMCF, 1983) ........................................ 16
# LIST OF TABLES

| TABLE 2.1 | Foods associated with food-borne incidents in Canada 1975-1984 (Todd, 1992) | 6 |
| TABLE 2.2 | Sources of some bacteria of health concern in meat (Church & Wood, 1992) | 8 |
| TABLE 2.3 | Leading vehicle Foods known for salmonellosis outbreaks in the United States, 1973-1987 (Bean & Griffin, 1990) | 11 |
| TABLE 2.4 | Salmonella outbreaks, cases and deaths traced to foods in the United States, 1983-1987 (Bean et al., 1990) | 12 |
| TABLE 2.5 | Outbreaks, cases and deaths from Clostridium perfringens food borne gastroenteritis in the United States, 1983-1987 (Bean et al., 1990) | 13 |
| TABLE 2.6 | Leading food sources for Staphylococcal Gastroenteritis outbreaks in the United States, 1973-1987 (Bean & Griffin, 1990) | 14 |
| TABLE 2.7 | Staphylococcal Food-borne Gastroenteritis Outbreaks and Cases in the United States, 1973-1987 (Bean & Griffen, 1990; Bean et al., 1990) | 15 |
| TABLE 2.8 | Leading factors that led to the outbreaks of Staphylococcal Food-borne gastroenteritis in the United States, 1973-1987 (Bean & Griffin, 1990) | 15 |
| TABLE 2.9 | Generic HACCP plan: Critical Control Points for beef slaughter (NACMCF, 1993) | 33 |
TABLE 3.1  Critical control point work sheet for skinning step ..........................46

TABLE 3.2  Critical control point work sheet for evisceration step .....................47

TABLE 3.3  Critical control point work sheet for chilling step ............................48

TABLE 4.1  Mean¹ microbial counts $\log_{10} \text{cm}^{-2}$ on bovine carcasses at baseline and after HACCP implementation taken after splitting of carcass ........................................63.

TABLE 4.2  Mean¹ microbial counts $\log_{10} \text{cm}^{-2}$ on bovine carcasses at baseline and after HACCP implementation taken after 24 hours chilling of carcass ........................................63

TABLE 4.3  Mean¹ baseline microbial counts $\log_{10} \text{cm}^{-2}$ on bovine carcasses taken after splitting of carcass and after 24 hours chilling at baseline ........................................69

TABLE 4.4  Mean¹ microbial counts $\log_{10} \text{cm}^{-2}$ on bovine carcasses taken after splitting of carcass and after 24 hours chilling after HACCP implementation ........................................70
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Types of food poisoning associated with meat pathogens (adapted from: Sprenger, 1995) ...................................................... 9

Figure 2.2 Layout of a cattle slaughter house (Atlas-Danmark) ..........22

Figure 2.3 Typical cattle slaughter line and potential problems (adapted from: Church and Wood, 1992) ........................................... 25

Figure 2.4 Lateral view of beef carcass depicting potential contamination points (adapted from: Jericho et al., 1993) .................. 26

Figure 2.5 Causes of contamination and critical control points before and during the slaughter of cattle (adapted from: Kasprowsiak & Hechelmann, 1992) ......................................................... 30

Figure 3.1 Experimental design for the study ........................................ 39

Figure 3.4 Pictorial presentations of the evisceration step .............. 44

Figure 3.5 Pictorial presentations of the chilling step .................... 45

Figure 3.6 Malthius Procedure for the Detection of Salmonella ........ 59

Figure 4.1 Effect of HACCP implementation (□ = after training, O = before training) on aerobic plate counts (log10cfu/cm²) at the carcass splitting step (p = 0.85) and after 24 hours chilling (p < 0.04) .................................................................................. 64
Figure 4.2  Effect of HACCP implementation (O = before training □ = after training) on Staphylococcus aureus counts (log₁₀ cfu/cm²) at the carcass splitting step (p = 0.0001) and after 24 hours chilling (p = 0.0001) ...

Figure 4.3  Effect of HACCP implementation (O = before training □ = after training) on total coliform counts (log₁₀ cfu/cm²) at the carcass splitting step (p = 0.0004) and after 24 hours chilling (p = 0.0001) ...

Figure 4.4  Effect of HACCP implementation (O = before training □ = after training) on Escherichia coli counts (log₁₀ cfu/cm²) at the carcass splitting step (p = 0.214) and after 24 hours chilling (p = 0.0001) ...

Figure 4.5  Effect of HACCP implementation (O = before training □ = after training) on Clostridium perfringens counts (log₁₀ cfu/cm²) at the carcass splitting step (p = 0.006) and after 24 hours chilling (p = 0.02) ...

Figure 4.6  Effect of chilling (□ = 24 hours chilling, O = after splitting) on aerobic plate counts (log₁₀ cfu/cm²) before (p = 0.006) and after training (p = 0.003) ...

Figure 4.7  Effect of chilling (□ = 24 hours chilling, O = after splitting) on Staphylococcus counts (log₁₀ cfu/cm²) before (p = 0.34) and after training (p = 0.0001) ...

Figure 4.8  Effect of chilling (□ = 24 hours chilling, O = after splitting) on total coliform counts (log₁₀ cfu/cm²) before (p = 0.01) and after training (p = 0.0001) ...
Effect of chilling (☐ = 24 hours chilling, O = after splitting) on *Escherichia coli* counts (log$_{10}$cfu/cm$^2$) before (p = 0.47) and after training (p = 0.0001).

Effect of chilling (☐ = 24 hours chilling, O = after splitting) on *Clostridium perfringens* counts (log$_{10}$cfu/cm$^2$) before (p = 0.11) and after training (p = 0.16).