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After slaughter

Following stunning and slaughter, the next process is scalding to loosen the feathers prior to plucking. There are different scalding technologies, including immersing the birds in hot water or scalding using steam. The scald tanks where the birds are immersed can, in some circumstances, act as a carrier for bacteria to transfer from one carcass to another. However, it can also help to reduce levels of Salmonella because in this process a lot of the dirt and faeces are removed from the carcass.

Time and temperature is very important during the scalding process, not only does it prepare the carcass for feather removal, it also reduces defects during dressing. If a carcass is over-scalded, the meat will start to cook. If the temperature is too low, the tank becomes a breeding ground for bacteria.

There are a number of steps that can be taken to help reduce the potential risk of contamination in the scalders:

- Maintaining and controlling the temperature is one of the key features to keep bacteria under control.
- Using a bird brush and washer before the scalding process can help to reduce contamination.
- The use of a counter flow system in the scald tank will see the birds moving into cleaner water towards the end and can help to reduce contamination.
- Using a multistage scalding tank system can further reduce contamination problems. This would consist of 2-4 water tanks where the carcasses are moved from the initial, more contaminated bath, to the cleanest bath at the end.
- Testing the pH of the water is also very important because a high alkaline content in the water is better for reducing Salmonella contamination.

Good process controls during plucking are also critical as cross-contamination can occur through contact with contaminated rubber picking fingers and contaminated reuse water. Regular maintenance and sanitation of equipment at this stage of the process is very important, this includes preventing a build-up of feathers.