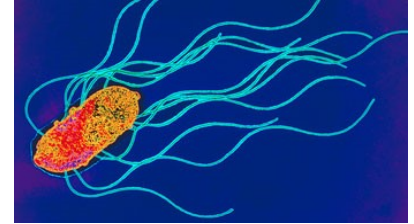
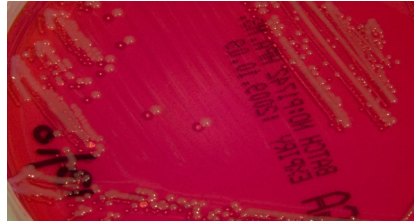
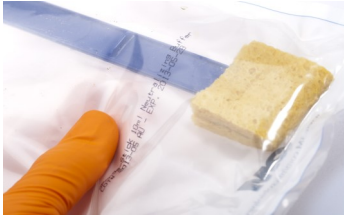




UK Health  
Security  
Agency

# Environmental Swab Scheme



This microbiology scheme provides proficiency testing (PT) samples to laboratories that examine swabs for microbial pathogens and/or hygiene indicator organisms. The scheme focuses on raising awareness of pathogens implicated in foodborne outbreaks, the challenges associated with enumerating samples and the accurate reporting of results from random/template area swab.

Determining that foodborne pathogens are absent in ready to eat food preparation area or retail setting is of particular importance to prevent public health incidents.

Determination of the number of aerobic viable micro-organisms, *Escherichia coli* and *Enterobacteriaceae* on a specified area of a surface can provide an indication of cleanliness/sanitation. This allows monitoring of cleaning procedures over time, providing useful information on general environmental conditions.

This scheme allows you to:

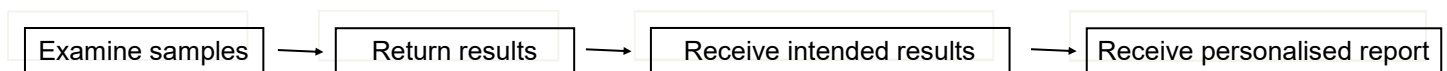
- assure your calculation ability for the different swab areas (random and template)
- have confidence in determining the pathogen/s likely to be implicated based on an outbreak scenario provided

## Examinations for this scheme are:

Hygiene indicator organisms

Relevant pathogens that maybe implicated based on an outbreak scenario provided

**Four distributions available per year, each containing two samples**



Your laboratory's personalised report will contain information such as:

- the contents and the levels of the sample
- performance data for each examination for you to compare your performance against other laboratories
- your on-going performance over a year which demonstrates your commitment to quality to clients and colleagues
- where relevant actions to take to ensure that your laboratory retains high standards of testing
- educational information on difficult and challenging samples

For your investigation repeat samples are provided free of charge and further expertise can be provided by our panel of renowned food and water microbiologists

**Satisfactory performance with your PT provides assurance that your laboratory is compliant with testing standards, thereby meeting and maintaining accreditation requirements.**

Contact the Food and Environmental Proficiency Testing Unit:  
Tel: +44(0)20 8327 7119 email: [foodeqa@ukhsa.gov.uk](mailto:foodeqa@ukhsa.gov.uk)



# Assisting laboratories world wide in maintaining standards of excellence



Food, water and environmental laboratories play a vital role in protecting the public's health by helping to ensure that food is safe to consume, waters are safe to drink and that environmental and recreational waters do not make people ill.

Proficiency testing or external quality assessment provides laboratories with an independent external assessment of their performance. Regular participation in proficiency testing schemes is an important part of laboratories quality procedures and helps to ensure that the results of their tests are accurate.

With over 25 years of experience, UK Health Security Agency's Food and Environmental Proficiency Testing Unit is a world leader in providing microbiology proficiency testing schemes to food, water and environmental laboratories both in the UK and in over 70 countries internationally.

Our dedicated team of experts has unrivalled professional, scientific and technical expertise in proficiency testing. Participants also have the additional advantage of drawing on the full scientific resources of UK Health Security Agency

## Benefits of participating in UK Health Security Agency's food and water proficiency testing schemes:

- Unique schemes provided:
  - that support both EU and non-EU legislation
  - inclusion of organisms such as *Mycobacterium* spp. in endoscope and cardiac cooler waters
  - Molecular scheme for Shiga-toxin producing *Escherichia coli*
  - *Vibrio cholerae* testing
  - *Staphylococcus aureus* Enterotoxin
  - Norovirus and Hepatitis A virus
- Free of charge repeat samples
- Access to expert food and water microbiologists
- Bespoke schemes reports provided
- UKHSA and z-scores provided in some scheme reports
- Ability to make extremely low level samples
- On-going performance assessment in the reports
- Samples provided in easy to use LENTICULE® discs

## PT Schemes available include:

Environmental Swab  
European Food Microbiology Legislation  
Standard Scheme  
Non-Pathogen  
Norovirus and Hepatitis A virus\*  
Pathogenic *Vibrio*  
Shellfish  
Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli*  
*Staphylococcus aureus* enterotoxin  
Bottled and Mineral Water  
Dialysis Water  
Drinking Water  
Endoscope Rinse Water  
Hospital Tap Water  
*Legionella* Isolation  
*Legionella* Molecular  
Recreational and Surface Water  
*Mycobacterium* spp. in Water

**Schemes are accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)  
to the international standard ISO/IEC 17043:2010 \*not accredited**