



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

# *Mycobacterium* spp. In Water Scheme

This microbiology scheme provides proficiency testing (PT) samples to laboratories that examine endoscope rinse and heater cooler unit (HCU) waters for *Mycobacterium* spp.

HCUs are used during open heart surgeries to warm or cool a patient. There is the potential for *Mycobacterium chimaera* or other species to grow in a water tank in the HCU. Environmental non-pathogenic mycobacteria present a particular problem when they occur in the final rinse-water of some instruments used for diagnosis.

This PT scheme helps identify gaps in your processes, highlighting where quality improvements can be made. It also provides an opportunity to improve staff understanding of organisms not frequently encountered.



## The scheme focuses on raising awareness of:

- the variation of different methods and media used, highlighting the impact on PT results
- interpreting the microbiology results obtained
- the importance of testing for *Mycobacterium* spp. highlighting the difficulties associated with isolating this organism.

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

- the contents and the levels of the sample
- performance data for each examination (you can compare against other laboratories)
- on-going performance demonstrating your commitment to quality
- where relevant, actions to take to ensure your laboratory retains high standards
- educational information on difficult and challenging samples

## In addition, this scheme provides

- four distributions (two for Endoscope rinse water, two for heater cooler water) available per year, each containing two samples
- repeat samples are provided free of charge and advice can be provided by our expert food and water microbiologists

Satisfactory PT results provide assurance your laboratory is compliant with testing standards, thereby meeting and maintaining accreditation requirements.



Contact: Food and Environmental Proficiency Testing Unit

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# Assisting laboratories worldwide 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 (PT), or external quality assessment, provides laboratories with an independent external assessment of their performance. Regular participation in PT schemes is an important part of laboratory quality procedures to help ensure test results are accurate.**

**The UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA) Food and Environmental Proficiency Testing Unit has over 25-years experience providing microbiology PT schemes for food, water and environmental laboratories in the UK and in over 70 countries worldwide. Our dedicated team of experts enjoy unrivalled professional, scientific and technical expertise in PT, supported by the full scientific resource of the UKHSA.**

## **Benefits of participating in UKHSA's food and water PT schemes:**

- unique schemes provided based on current legislation
- inclusion of organisms such as *Mycobacterium* spp. in endoscope and heater cooler waters
- free of charge repeat samples
- access to expert food and water microbiologists
- bespoke scheme 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 formats

## **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
- *Mycobacterium* spp. in water
- Recreational and Surface Waters

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



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