Campylobacter - The Facts:

- Carried by many animals and birds, and in stream and river water contaminated by sewage.

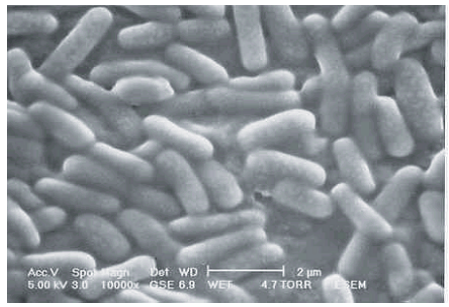
Cases have been reported from drinking doorstep delivery milk which has been pecked by birds!

- Found in unpasteurised milk, poultry, red meat, shellfish.
- A Food Standards Agency survey in 2001 found 50% of chickens on retail sale in the UK to be contaminated with Campylobacter.
- Illness begins 2-11 days after eating contaminated food.
- Causes diarrhoea and often severe stomach pains
- It is thought that as few as 100 bacteria may cause illness (compare Salmonella, where you usually need at least 100,000).
- Can be found in soil which has been contaminated with bird or animal faeces, so putting your hand to your mouth whilst gardening for example can result in infection.

Campylobacter - how to prevent it

So what can we do to prevent cases of Campylobacteriosis? Fortunately, like Salmonella and E. coli O157, it is easy killed by heat, therefore thorough cooking of foods, particularly meat and poultry, is an important control measure. But because only a small number of Campylobacter bacteria are required to cause illness, prevention of cross-contamination is also of paramount importance. So remember to:

- Use separate work surfaces, utensils etc for raw and ready-to-eat foods
- Wash hands thoroughly between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods
- Use a food-grade sanitiser (anti-bacterial) chemical regularly on food-contact and hand-contact surfaces. If you



use a chemical which must be diluted, ensure that it is being used at the right concentration.

- Avoid putting your hand to your mouth when handling raw meat and poultry – it is surprisingly easy to infect yourself with Campylobacter!

Would you still pass your Basic Food Hygiene certificate?

So, you got your certificate several years ago and it has pride of place over the counter to impress your customers. But if you sat the exam today, would you still pass?! Try the quiz below then look at the bottom of the back page to see how you got on…

1. What is the most common symptom of food poisoning?
2. According to good practice, what is the maximum length of time that food should be left to cool before placing it in the refrigerator or freezer?
3. If a refrigerator contains high-risk food, what is the maximum temperature it should run at according to the law?
4. You notice some greasy smears on the skirting boards. What might this indicate?
5. A pot of cream in the 'fridge has yesterdays date on it. Can you still use it?
6. What is the minimum temperature for hot holding of food?
7. When subjected to high temperatures, some bacteria form spores. What are spores, and how do they affect the safety of cooked foods?
8. After you have cleaned a surface, what could you use to 'reduce bacteria to a safe level'?
9. If you have had a stomach upset, how long should you remain off work?
10. According to good practice, at or below what temperature should you operate your freezers?