

# Listeria outbreak, wake-up call for food sector

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There's still a long road ahead for the department of health and its current headache, listeria monocytogenes.

"Locating the source of the listeria presents a huge challenge, in fact the Health Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi commented this morning that it was like 'looking for a needle in a haystack'," said

## Bridget Day of Food Focus

"This is why it is so important for effective communication to the food industry on these issues. The department of health and the NICD are using all channels available to them to disseminate requests for the industry to come forward with details of any positive results," Day said.

Linda Jackson, also of Food Focus, said the industry should take the outbreak of listeriosis

extremely seriously.

"Although we are in a reactive situation at the moment, we believe that this is a wake-up call to the food industry to get their 'house in order' and ensure they are following best practices and addressing the threat of listeria – and other foodborne illnesses – effectively and proactively, to prevent a repeat of this terrible outbreak," Jackson said.

The department is putting a plan in place for environmental health practitioners from municipalities in the most affected provinces (Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) to inspect food processing facilities, including packaging at distribution plants for bigger retailers and to take samples. This will definitely assist in locating the source of the outbreak."

Day said there were about 17 strains of listeria to date.