

ABSTRACT

During recent years surveillance has assumed greater importance in the prevention and control of imported diseases. The increasing numbers of infections and the emergence of new diseases gives rise to increases of selected specific factors known to be associated with these infections.

International movement of foods is increasing in the Caribbean region hence the need for continuous scrutiny of the factors that determine the occurrence and distribution of diseases. International cooperation is needed in avoiding low quality products and in dealing with re-shipment of rejected foodstuffs.

A survey was done amongst a total of 146 workers consisting of 35 sanitation workers, 66 cold storage strippers and 45 public health inspectors. Information was sought in order to assess the level of surveillance of imported meats and factors that impact on the prevention and control of foodborne diseases.

Sanitation was generally satisfactory at both ports. It was found that the mean practice scores of all categories of workers were greater than their mean knowledge scores at both ports. Mean knowledge scores for cold storage strippers were less than 60% at both ports.

The regular cleaning and maintenance of the ports ensure a safe environment and assist in prevention of contamination. This does not mean that safety is assured as the port is an ideal place for the harbourage of rats and insect pests.

The low knowledge scores of cold storage strippers may be the result of not having any formal training in the handling and storage of meats. Surveillance of meats through inspection should be accompanied by regular sampling. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between knowledge of cold storage strippers and port. However, there was no significant difference for sanitation workers or public health inspectors.

The author concluded that even though the various knowledge and practice scores were similar in most instances, no significant differences were shown except for cold storage strippers. Recommendations were made including ongoing training for all categories of workers; development of standards to monitor meat imports; and collaboration and exchange of information in research, science and technology within the Caribbean.