

What are wet packs and why do they happen?

Over 28% of veterinary practices experience wet packs at least once a week*. This may not seem hugely concerning however wet packs are a sign that your equipment or your sterilisation process is not working as it should and there is something that needs immediate attention.

“Additionally, make sure that you do not overload your autoclave and follow all steps in your decontamination & sterilisation process”

What are wet packs?

One of the worst things you will encounter after running a sterilisation cycle in your autoclave is evidence of moisture within the chamber or within the load itself. Wet packs are a common cause of contamination - excessive moisture can act as a pathogen pathway and cause recontamination of your sterilised instruments and equipment.

Why do they happen?

Wet packs can occur for a variety of reasons including for example; not following processes or overloading autoclaves and mechanical failure is also a major factor.

UPON NOTICING WET PACKS OR MOISTURE WITHIN THE AUTOCLAVE CHAMBER - STOP USING THE EQUIPMENT STRAIGHT AWAY AND CALL YOUR SERVICE TECHNICIAN IMMEDIATELY.

How do we prevent wet packs?

A good way to prevent wet packs is to implement a daily monitoring routine to ensure your equipment is working correctly.

Autoclaves have built in monitoring systems that will indicate whether or not a cycle has reached the correct parameters (whether it has passed or failed). We cannot however rely on a single built in monitoring system to give us a full picture of the efficiency of that cycle. To reduce the risk of unsterile instruments or devices we therefore complete additional tests to verify the efficiency of our steriliser.

Two of the most basic and important verification products to use are:

- Bowie Dick tests – **page 8**
- Visual indicators such as TST test strips and autoclave tape – **page 9**



*NVS Decontamination & Sterilisation Survey April 2019