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Water quality — Requirements for establishing performance characteristics of quantitative microbiological methods

Qualité de l'eau — Exigences pour l'établissement des caractéristiqes de performance des méthodes microbiologiques quantitatives

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Contents

Page

Foreword ..... **v**

Introduction ..... **vi**

1 Scope **1**

2 Normative references **1**

3 Terms and definitions **1**

4 Basic concepts **6**
4.1 General 6
4.2 Characterization 7
4.3 Verification 8
4.4 Method comparison 8
4.5 Samples 9

5 Specifications: some guideline values **9**

6 Designs for determining performance characteristics of a method **10**
6.1 General considerations 10
6.2 Determination of sensitivity, specificity, efficiency, selectivity, false positive rate and false negative rate 10
6.2.1 Type of samples to be used 10
6.2.2 Number of samples 11
6.2.3 Procedure 11
6.2.4 Categorical performance characteristics 11
6.2.5 Worked example 12
6.3 Determination of the upper limit and consideration of the lower limit of detection 14
6.3.1 Working range 14
6.3.2 Upper limit related to linearity 14
6.3.3 Type and number of samples to be used 14
6.3.4 Worked example 15
6.3.5 The lower limit of detection 16
6.4 Assessment of precision: Determination of repeatability and reproducibility 16
6.4.1 General 16
6.4.2 Repeatability 17
6.4.3 Intralaboratory reproducibility 18
6.5 Robustness 20
6.5.1 General 20
6.5.2 Experimental designs for effects due to time and temperature 20
6.6 Relative recovery 21
6.6.1 General 21
6.6.2 Determination of relative recovery 21
6.7 Uncertainty of counting 22
6.7.1 General 22
6.7.2 Experimental design for assessing the uncertainty of counting colonies 22
6.7.3 Example of individual (or personal) uncertainty of counting colonies 22
6.7.4 Example of intralaboratory uncertainty of counting colonies 23
6.7.5 Example of intralaboratory uncertainty of reading MPN 23

7 Designs for single laboratory verification of a method **24**
7.1 General considerations 24
7.2 Calculation of sensitivity, specificity, efficiency, selectivity, false positive rate and false negative rate 24
7.2.1 Type of sample to be used 24
7.2.2 Number of samples 25
7.2.3 Procedure for confirmation 25
7.2.4 Categorical performance characteristics 25
7.3 Determination of repeatability 26

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7.4 Uncertainty of counting 26
7.5 Procedure for single laboratory verification 26
Annex A (informative) **Mathematical models of variation** **30**
Annex B (normative) **Assessment of the lower limits** **40**
Annex C (normative) **Assessment of the upper limit** **43**
Annex D (normative) **Determination of the operational variability in repeatability and intralaboratory reproducibility conditions** **44**
Annex E (normative) **Uncertainty of counting** **48**
Annex F (normative) **Determination of the operational variability (interlaboratory reproducibility) in a collaborative performance study** **50**
Annex G (informative) **Glossary of principal symbols** **58**
Bibliography **60**

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 147, *Water quality*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Microbiological methods*.

This first edition of ISO 13843 cancels and replaces ISO/TR 13843:2000, which has been technically revised.

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Introduction

Methods are considered microbiological when the quantitative estimate is based on counting of microbial particles either directly with the aid of a microscope or indirectly on the basis of growth (multiplication) into colonies, turbidity, a colour change or fluorescence. The principles and procedures within the scope of this document are commonly known as microscopic count, most probable number (MPN) and colony count. Most of the procedures for the determination of performance characteristics described in this document are applicable to all three types of method. However, where the procedures are not applicable, alternative suggestions are made within the body of the document or in Annexes D and E (for repeatability, reproducibility and uncertainty of counting).

Plaque counts of bacteriophages are in most respects similar to bacterial colony counts.

Some of the ”newer” microbiological methods such as those utilizing fluorescent *in situ* hybridization (FISH) or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) can also be covered by this document. However, they may require special consideration, depending upon how they are used. The issues of importance in these situations include the mechanism of determining the numbers of microbes present (e.g. standard curve for qPCR or microscopic count for FISH) and the viability of the organisms detected. If such techniques are used for confirmation as part of a method then all sections of this document are relevant.

While not essential, during the characterization of microbiological methods it may be beneficial to generate data using stressed organisms. Various methods can be used to stress organisms, but the two that are most useful for water are disinfectant stress (usually chlorine injury) and nutrient depletion caused by organisms being in a low nutrient environment (i.e. drinking water and other oligotrophic waters) for a period prior to testing. The effect on some of the performance characteristics of “stressing” organisms is almost totally dependent on the type and degree of stress applied and it is inappropriate to include such detail in this document. However, there are descriptions in the literature that laboratories can follow in case they should wish to determine performance characteristics of a method with stressed cells.

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Water quality — Requirements for establishing performance characteristics of quantitative microbiological methods

1 Scope

This document deals with characterization of microbiological methods. In terms of this document, characterization means the study of parameters that can be measured to describe how the method is likely to perform in a given set of conditions, which can be described as performance characteristics. The document describes procedures for the determination of performance characteristics which can be used for subsequent validation or verification of methods.

The emphasis is on selective quantitative methods and this document applies to all types of water. For methods that are not based upon direct microscopic count, colony count or most probable number, the applicability of the procedures described in this document should be considered carefully.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 17994:2014, *Water quality — Requirements for the comparison of the relative recovery of microorganisms by two quantitative methods*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at http://www.iso.org./obp

3.1
accuracy
measurement accuracy
closeness of agreement between a measured quantity value and an assigned quantity value of a measurand

Note 1 to entry: The concept ‘measurement accuracy’ is not a quantity and is not given a numerical quantity value. A measurement is said to be more accurate when it offers a smaller measurement error.

Note 2 to entry: ‘Measurement accuracy’ is sometimes understood as closeness of agreement between measured quantity values that are being attributed to the measurand.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC Guide 99:2007, 2.13[16], modified — “…a true quantity value” replaced by “… an assigned quantity value; Notes 1 and 2 to entry added]

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3.2
analyte
component represented in the name of a measurable quantity

Note 1 to entry: In water microbiology, the analyte is ideally defined as a list of taxonomically defined species. In most cases, in practice the analyte can only be defined by group designations less accurate than taxonomic definitions.

[SOURCE: ISO 17511:2003, 3.2[14]]

3.3
analytical portion
test portion
volume of particle suspension (sample) inoculated into a detector unit (agar plate, membrane filter, test tube, microscopic grid square)

3.4
bias
measurement bias
estimate of a systematic measurement error, or the systematic difference between the quantitative assigned value and the average of measurement replicate results

3.5
categorical characteristics
method performance characteristic numerically expressed as a relative frequency based on P/A or +/- classification

3.6
colony-forming unit
CFU
colony-forming particle
CFP
organism (or cluster of organisms) with the ability to form a colony under certain specified conditions

Note 1 to entry: The term was originally introduced to convey the idea that a colony may originate not only from a single cell but from a solid chain or aggregate of cells, a cluster of spores, a piece of mycelium, etc. It mistakenly equates the number of colonies observed to the number of living entities seeded on the medium. Growth unit, viable particle, propagule and germ are terms with the same meaning but convey the original idea better and apply not only to colony count methods but also to the most probable number (MPN).

3.7
collaborative method performance
method or laboratory performance test where several laboratories join in an experiment planned and co-ordinated by a leader laboratory

Note 1 to entry: Collaborative tests are mainly of two types. Intercalibration exercises are made to allow laboratories to compare their analytical results with those of other participating laboratories.

Note 2 to entry: Method performance tests produce precision estimates (repeatability, reproducibility) out of data accumulated when several participating laboratories study identical samples with a strictly standardized method.

3.8
confirmed colony count
verified colony count
presumptive colony count corrected for false positives

Note 1 to entry: Mathematically:

$$pc = \frac{k}{n} c$$

where

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c is the presumptive count;

p is the true positive rate;

n is the number of presumptive positives isolated for confirmation;

k is the number confirmed.

3.9
corroborated count
count obtained when using a secondary confirmation procedure

3.10
detection level
minimum concentration of organisms that produce evidence of growth with a probability of P = 0,95 when inoculated into a specified culture medium and incubated under defined conditions

Note 1 to entry: The theoretical level that conforms to this definition is an average of three viable cells in an inoculum volume.

3.11
detection set
combination of plates or tubes on which quantitative estimation of sample microbial concentration is based

Note 1 to entry: The detection set is the set of plates or tubes utilized for numerical estimation of a single value.

EXAMPLE Parallel plates of a suspension, plates from consecutive dilutions, 3 × 5 tube MPN system, microtitre plate.

3.12
detector
particle detector
plate of solid matrix or a tube of liquid containing a nutrient medium for counting or detecting biologically active particles

3.13
efficiency
E
fraction of colonies that are correctly assigned as positives and negatives

Note 1 to entry: Mathematically:

$$E = \frac{a+d}{n}$$

where

a is the number of typical colonies confirmed as being the target organism (true positives);

d is the number of atypical colonies confirmed as not being the target organism (true negatives);

n is the total number of colonies tested for confirmation.

3.14
false negative
result indicated by the test method to be negative which has subsequently been shown to contain the target organism

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3.15
false positive
result indicated by the test method to be positive which was subsequently shown not to contain the target organism

3.16
germ
entity capable of biological activity (e.g. respiration or reproduction in a nutrient medium)

3.17
limit of determination
lowest analyte concentration per analytical portion where the expected relative standard uncertainty, equals a specified value

3.18
method-defined count
count obtained by using only the procedures in the described method

3.19
negative binomial distribution
particular "overdispersed" statistical distribution of counts

Note 1 to entry: Its variance can be expressed as $s^2 = \bar{x} + u_0^2\,\bar{x}^2$ ($\bar{x}$ = mean).

Note 2 to entry: In this document, the square of the relative operational standard deviation (u_0) is substituted for the inverse of the exponent ($1/k$) of the standard equation for the negative binomial distribution.

3.20
outlier
member of a set of values which is inconsistent with other members of that set

Note 1 to entry: An extreme value which normally appears randomly in less than 1 % of repetitive tests, but more frequently if abnormal situations occur. Statistical test procedures can be used to quantify this probability.

3.21
over-dispersion
variation in excess of Poisson randomness

Note 1 to entry: Detected qualitatively by the Poisson index of dispersion and measured quantitatively by estimating the parameter u_0 (relative operational standard deviation) of the negative binomial distribution.

3.22
parallel counts
particle or colony numbers in equal analytical portions drawn from the same suspension

3.23
Poisson distribution
fully random distribution of particle numbers when sampling a perfectly mixed suspension

Note 1 to entry: The probability $P(k)$ of observing exactly k units in a test portion when the mean equals μ is calculated from

$$P(k) = \frac{u^k}{k!} e^{-\mu}$$

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3.24
precision
measurement precision
closeness of agreement between indications or measured quantity values obtained by replicate measurements on the same or similar objects under specified conditions

Note 1 to entry: Measurement precision is usually expressed numerically by measures of imprecision, such as standard deviation, variance, or coefficient of variation under the specified conditions of measurement.

Note 2 to entry: The 'specified conditions' can be, for example, repeatability conditions of measurement, intermediate precision conditions of measurement, or reproducibility conditions of measurement (see ISO 5725-3[4]).

Note 3 to entry: Measurement precision is used to define measurement repeatability, intermediate measurement precision, and measurement reproducibility.

3.25
proportionality
agreement of observed particle counts with the volume (or dilution) of a series of analytical portions from a common root suspension

Note 1 to entry: Proportionality is evaluated as the log-likelihood ratio statistic G^2 with n-1 degrees of freedom.

3.26
recovery
general term used for the number of particles estimated in a test portion or sample, with the understanding that there is a true (although unknown) number of particles of which 100 % or less are "recovered" by the employed methodology

Note 1 to entry: Another similar term commonly used is productivity (see ISO 11133[12]).

3.27
relative recovery
ratio of colony counts obtained by two methods tested on equal test portions of the same suspension

3.28
relative operational standard deviation
u_0
operational variability, expressed as a relative standard uncertainty, associated with the technical steps of the analytical procedure

Note 1 to entry: The relative operational standard deviation is often expressed in percent.

3.29
relative operational variance
u_0^2
over-dispersion constant, the square of relative operational standard deviation

3.30
relative standard deviation
u_{rel}
estimate of the standard deviation of a population from a sample of n results divided by the mean of that sample

3.31
relative variance
u_{rel}^2
square of relative standard deviation

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3.32
repeatability
measurement repeatability
measurement precision under a set of repeatability conditions of measurement

3.33
repeatability conditions
condition of measurement, out of a set of conditions that includes the same measurement procedure, same operators, same measuring system, same operating conditions and same location, and replicate measurements on the same or similar objects over a short period of time

3.34
reproducibility
measurement reproducibility
measurement precision under reproducibility conditions of measurement

Note 1 to entry: Relevant statistical terms are given in ISO 5725-1[2] and ISO 5725-2[3].

3.35
reproducibility conditions
condition of measurement, out of a set of conditions that includes different locations, operators, measuring systems, and replicate measurements on the same or similar objects

3.36
robustness
insensitivity of an analytical method to small changes in procedure

Note 1 to entry: To examine the robustness it is advisable to "abuse" the method in a controlled way.

3.37
sensitivity
fraction of the total number of positive cultures or colonies correctly assigned in the presumptive inspection

3.38
specificity
fraction of the total number of negative cultures or colonies correctly assigned in the presumptive inspection

3.39
standard uncertainty
uncertainty of the result of a measurement expressed as a standard deviation

3.40
uncertainty of counting
relative standard deviation of results of repeated counting of the colonies or particles of the same plate(s) or field(s) under stipulated conditions (same person, different persons in one laboratory)

3.41
verification
performance of a second characterization by a different laboratory to confirm the results of the original characterization

4 Basic concepts

4.1 General

As far as particle statistics are concerned, microscopic counts obey the same laws as viable counts but they are, with the exception of microcolony methods, free from the biological problems associated with growth. Differential stains, specifically labelled complexes or other agents used for finding the target

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