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Treatment Manual

Nonchemical Treatments

Heat • Steam Treatments

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This section includes information from the old Treatment Manual and is for future development.

Principle

Steam at a temperature of 212°F will destroy most pathogenic microorganisms of the common vegetative forms or the spore types when in the growing or vegetative state in a short period of exposure. Some spores, however, are much more resistant and will withstand prolonged periods of exposure to steam at atmospheric pressure. Saturated steam at temperatures of 240°F to 248°F (10 to 15 lbs. pure steam pressure) will destroy the most resistant spores in a brief interval of exposure. However, near-complete air discharge from the autoclave or steam chamber is necessary. When steam is admitted to a chamber from which the air is completely evacuated, the temperature of the steam throughout the chamber will advance at once to the maximum range that can be attained for the pressure carried. If air remains in the chamber, the ultimate temperature will be reduced dependent upon the quantity of air remaining. Refer to a recording or indicating thermometer for correct chamber temperature-pressure relationships.

Steam Pressure Sterilization

Live steam is introduced into a closed chamber containing the material to be treated until the required temperature and pressure are indicated. The temperature/pressure relationship is maintained at or above this point for the required exposure period. The exposure period will depend on the nature of the material, quantity, and its penetrable condition.

Loose Masses of Material

For loose masses of material, which permit rapid and complete penetration of steam to all parts of the mass, no initial vacuum is needed, but air must be released until steam vapor escapes, and exposure at 20 pounds pressure for 10 minutes, 15 lbs. for 15 minutes, or 10 lbs. for 20 minutes is sufficient.

Closely Packed Material

For closely packed material, such as soil or baled straw, special measures are needed to ensure rapid heat penetration to all parts of the material. Baled rice straw, for example, is required to have a density of less than 30 lbs. per cubic foot since penetration at higher densities is too slow to be practical. Soil, if in large containers, will not allow adequate treatment under normal sterilization exposure periods. Quicker penetration of the steam is obtained by first exhausting the air in the chamber to a high vacuum and then introducing live steam until the required positive pressure is reached.

Examples of the pressure-temperature relationships are listed below. The gauge pressure in pounds per square inch corresponds to the temperature of saturated steam in degrees Fahrenheit. Zero gauge pressure corresponds to an absolute pressure of 14.7 lbs. per square inch. The figures are based upon the complete replacement of air by steam. If air replacement is not complete the temperature for any given pressure will be less than the corresponding temperature.

Gauge Pressure (lbs. per sq. in.)	Temperature °F
10	239.4
15	249.8
20	258.8
30	274.1
40	286.7
50	297.7
60	307.4

Steam Jet Method

Live steam from a jet or nozzle is forced into or through a more or less loose and open mass of material in such amount and for such period required to raise the temperature of all parts of the mass to approximately 212°F. This method takes advantage of the considerable latent heat liberated when steam condenses into water. This process does not effect complete sterilization since spore-forming bacteria are not always destroyed. Since no spore-forming bacteria are known that cause plant diseases, however, and fungi are readily killed by the

temperatures reached, this process is effective for quarantine purposes if the necessary degree of heat is generated in all parts of the material.

