

Reduced susceptibilities to biocides and resistance to antibiotics in food-associated bacteria following exposure to quaternary ammonium compounds

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1	Reduced susceptibilities to biocides and resistance to antibiotics in food-
2	associated bacteria following exposure to quaternary ammonium
3	compounds
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14	Abbreviated running headline : Adaptive cross-resistance in response to QAC
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Aims: Our aim was to assess the effects of step-wise exposure to didecyl dimethyl ammonium chloride (DDAC)
 on the antimicrobial (antibiotics and biocides) susceptibilities of food-associated bacterial strains.

26 Methods and Results: Adaptive responses of bacterial strains were investigated by exposing the strains daily to 27 increasing sub-inhibitory concentrations of DDAC for 7 days. Following adaptation to DDAC, a 3-fold increase 28 in the MIC values for this biocide was observed in 48 % of the Escherichia coli and Listeria monocytogenes 29 strains, and 3% of the Salmonella strains. Reduced susceptibility to other biocides was found with the most 30 important increase in MIC for benzalkonium chloride (BC) and a commercial biocide formulation (Galox Horizon) 31 containing DDAC and glutaraldehyde, for all species except Salmonella. Increase in antibiotic MIC values was 32 more pronounced in *Escherichia coli* in terms of antibiotic numbers and of magnitude (from 4- to 32-fold increase) 33 and, to a lesser extent, in Salmonella strains. Most of these strains had acquired resistance to ampicillin, 34 cefotaxime, ceftazidime, chloramphenicol and ciprofloxacin. 35 Conclusions: The effects of exposure to DDAC on biocides and antibiotics susceptibilities depend upon the

36 bacteria species.

Significance and Impact of the Study: Extensive use of DDAC at sub-inhibitory concentrations may lead to the
 development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and may represent a public health issue.

39 Keywords Adaptation, Disinfectants, Antibiotics, Decreased susceptibility, Resistance, QAC

40 Introduction

Biocides are chemical agents playing a crucial role in limiting the spread of infections and diseases. The quaternary ammonium compounds, such as benzalkonium chloride (BC) and didecyl dimethyl ammonium chloride (DDAC), are among the most widely used biocides in cleaning and disinfection procedures. There are growing concerns about the risk of selection of resistant bacteria to antibiotics with regard to the increased use of biocides. The main reasons for the increasing prevalence of antibiotic resistances are the widespread usage of antibiotics in human and veterinary therapy and the inclusion of antibiotics in animal feedstuffs (Ortega Morente *et al.*, 2013). The contribution of other factors such as disinfectant usage is nevertheless difficult to evaluate.

Disinfectants as biocides are generally effective to inhibit or kill bacteria when they are applied at the concentrations recommended by the manufacturer. They can be found at lower concentrations in contact with bacteria because of insufficient cleaning or rinsing before disinfection, under-dosing of applied disinfectant, and biofilm formation. Under such conditions, bacteria are exposed to sub-lethal concentrations of disinfectants, and this can lead to adaptation of initially susceptible bacteria (Davidson and Harrison, 2002). Repeated exposure to sub-inhibitory concentrations of biocide may promote a decreased susceptibility or resistance to other antimicrobial agents. Bacteria may indeed elicit common cellular responses to counteract the effects of biocides and antibiotic : reduced permeability or uptake, enhanced efflux, enzymatic inactivation (Buffet-Bataillon *et al.*, 2011). This phenomenon has been known as cross-susceptibility or cross-resistance between biocides and antibiotics, but the mechanisms are still poorly understood.

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The adaptation to sub-inhibitory concentrations of biocide has been documented for some bacteria (Lunden *et al.*, 2003, Condell *et al.*, 2012, Mavri and Mozina, 2013). DDAC is widely used but there were a few studies about its effect on different food-associated bacteria on the contrary to BC. These data will be useful in the framework of European discussion about the importance of cross-resistance between biocides and antibiotics as already reported by SCENIHR Committee (Scenihr, 2010).

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The aim was to assess the effects of step-wise exposure to DDAC on the antimicrobial susceptibilities of foodassociated bacterial strains. The analysis included the susceptibility to the biocide itself, the susceptibility to 4 other disinfectants and the cross-resistance to clinically important antimicrobials. Four species were chosen in this study (*Campylobacter coli, Salmonella enterica, Listeria monocytogenes* and *Escherichia coli*) as they belong to the nine biological hazards transmitted to human through the consumption of pork products (Efsa and Cdc, 2016).

70 Material and methods

71 Bacterial strains

A total of 136 strains were tested (Table 1). The species considered were *Escherichia coli* (n=54 strains), *Campylobacter coli* (n=16 strains), *Salmonella enterica* (n=35 strains) and *Listeria monocytogenes* (n=31 strains). They were isolated from pig faeces at slaughterhouse during the annual French antibiotic resistance monitoring program or from pork meat at retail during European surveys carried out between 2008 and 2012. All the strains were kept at -80°C in a nutritive solution containing 20% (v/v) glycerol.

77 Biocide susceptibility testing

We used disinfectants commonly found in biocide formulations in the French pork industry. They included didecyl
dimethyl ammonium chloride (DDAC), benzalkonium chloride (BC), sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl) and hydrogen

peroxide (H_2O_2) . A commercially available food-grade biocide formulation (Galox Horizon) was also used, containing DDAC and glutaraldehyde. Susceptibility tests against the 4 active substances and the commercial biocide formulation were performed using a standard microdilution method.

83 Antibiotic susceptibility testing

Antibiotic susceptibility tests were performed using a standard microdilution method with the Sensititre[®] system on customized microtiter plates (Trek Diagnostic Systems, England). Antibiotics used for these tests are listed in Table S1. The strains were interpreted as susceptible or resistant to antibiotics according to the epidemiological resistance cut-off determined from EUCAST (European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing) and CA-SFM (Antibiogram Committee of the French Society for Microbiology,) websites (http://mic.eucast.org last accessed 12/02/2016). The number of tested antibiotics differed depending on the species: 20 antibiotics for *Listeria monocytogenes*, 14 for *Salmonella enterica*, 7 for *Campylobacter coli* and 13 for *Escherichia coli*.

91 Adaptation experiments to DDAC

92 Adaptive responses of bacterial strains were investigated by exposing the strains daily to increasing sub-inhibitory 93 concentrations of DDAC for 7 days (Soumet et al., 2012). Briefly, 100 μ l of a calibrated bacterial suspension (10⁸) 94 Colony-Forming Unit (CFU) per ml) was initially exposed to a starting concentration of disinfectant below the 95 Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) for 24 h at 37 °C in a total volume of 10 ml of Mueller-Hinton (MH) 96 broth. When growth was observed, a 10-fold diluted culture was transferred to fresh MH broth supplemented with 97 a higher concentration of disinfectant. If no growth was observed, the previous concentration was used. As control, 98 a bacterial suspension (100 μ) and MH broth (10 ml) without disinfectant were tested using the same protocol. 99 After 7 days, bacteria were spread with a loop (10 µl) on MH agar and incubated for 24 h at 37 °C. They were then 100 collected with 2.5 ml of storage nutritive solution and kept in cryotubes at -80 °C. MIC increase factor for each 101 biocide and each antibiotic was determined for each strain as a ratio between MIC after adaptation and MIC before 102 adaptation.

103

104 Statistical analysis

105 The distributions of susceptible and resistant strains before and after adaptation were compared by Chi² test

using Excel program for Windows. Results were considered significant when p < 0.05.

107 **Results**

108 **Reduced susceptibility to biocides**

Before the adaptation experiment, DDAC MIC values varied from 0.5 to 1.5 μ g ml⁻¹ among *Listeria* strains, from 4 to 8 μ g ml⁻¹ among *Salmonella* and from 1.5 to 4 μ g ml⁻¹ among *Escherichia coli* strains, and from 0.37 to 0.75 μ g ml⁻¹ among *Campylobacter* strains (Figure S1). Following adaptation to DDAC, a minimum 3-fold increase in the MIC values for this biocide was observed for 3% of the *Salmonella* strains, for 48% of the *Listeria monocytogenes* strains, and also 50% of the *E coli* strains (Table 2, Figure S1). The increase was lower (2-fold) for *Campylobacter coli*.

Reduced susceptibility to other biocides was found with the most important increase in MIC (3-fold) for BC and Galox Horizon, for all species except *Salmonella*. No significant increase (less than 2-fold) was observed in the susceptibility to hydrogen peroxide and sodium hypochlorite for all strains tested.

118 **Reduced susceptibility and resistance to antibiotics**

119 Following adaptation to DDAC, increase in antibiotic MIC values was more pronounced in Escherichia coli in 120 terms of antibiotic numbers (up to 8 antibiotics) and of magnitude (from 4- to 32-fold increase) and, to a lesser 121 extent, in Salmonella strains. The evolution of antibiotic susceptibility was low for Listeria monocytogenes and 122 *Campylobacter coli*; MICs increased from 4- to 8-fold for only 2 and 1 antibiotics, respectively (data not shown). 123 Before adaptation, 39 of the 54 strains of Escherichia coli (72.2%) were resistant to at least one antibiotic 124 (tetracycline and/or streptomycin and/or sulfomethosaxole). After step-wise exposure to DDAC, the MIC values 125 exceeded the antibiotic resistance epidemiological cut-off for 50 of the 54 strains (92%). Most of them acquired 126 resistance to one or two new antibiotics (Fig.1). Moreover, thirty two strains became multiresistant, defined as 127 resistant to at least 3 antibiotics of different antimicrobial categories (Magiorakos et al., 2012). Most of these 128 strains had acquired resistance to chloramphenicol, ampicillin, cefotaxime, ceftazidime, and ciprofloxacin (Fig. 129 2).

- Seven of the 35 *Salmonella* strains (20%) acquired resistance to various antibiotics (Table 3). They were mainly
 resistant to chloramphenicol (3 strains) and 5 out of 7 belonging to the serotype Derby.
- 132 Only one strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* and two strains of *Campylobacter coli* became resistant to tetracycline
- and streptomycin, respectively (data not shown).
- 134

135 **Discussion**

137 The step-wise exposure to didecyl dimethyl ammonium chloride (DDAC) modifies the susceptibilities to the 138 biocide, to other ones and to antibiotics of food-associated bacteria strains belonging to *Escherichia coli*, 139 *Salmonella* Typhimurium and Derby, *Campylobacter coli* and *Listeria monocytogenes* species. Adaptation to 140 DDAC differed depending on the species studied.

141 The ability of food-associated bacteria to survive in increasing concentrations of quaternary ammonium 142 compounds has been investigated, but mainly by using benzalkonium chloride (BC) (Lunden et al., 2003, 143 Braoudaki and Hilton, 2005). In this work, the effect of a repeated exposure to didecyl dimethyl ammonium 144 chloride (DDAC) was studied because this biocide compound is frequently used in food industry. A 3-fold increase 145 in the DDAC MIC values was observed in about half of the Escherichia coli and Listeria monocytogenes strains 146 tested. Using the same adaptation experiment, Soumet et al. (2012) previously found similar levels of reduction in 147 susceptibility to different QACs in Escherichia coli (with a mean 3-fold increase). Previous studies showed that 148 the reduced susceptibility to BC varied from 10% to 46% in Listeria monocytogenes isolated from foods and food 149 processing environments (Aase et al., 2000, Soumet et al., 2005, Xu et al., 2014) and that adaptation to various 150 disinfectants was common in this species (Lunden et al., 2003). The high adaptation ability observed here suggests 151 that the occurrence of decreased susceptibility to DDAC in *Listeria* is relatively high in food industry. Following 152 adaptation, a low increase in the DDAC MIC values was observed in Campylobacter coli and Salmonella strains. 153 No significant difference in the susceptibility to other biocides was found in Salmonella strains. These results are 154 consistent with a previous study, where no stable decrease in the biocide susceptibility was detected in Salmonella 155 after several rounds of *in vitro* selection by increasing concentrations of active biocides (Condell et al., 2012). 156 Concerning Campylobacter coli, Mavri and Mozina (2013) showed that a statistically significant difference was 157 observed between one strain exposed to BC and the control strain after 15 days of exposure. The period of exposure 158 in the current study may not be sufficient to observe significant biocide susceptibility changes in *Campylobacter* 159 coli. The impact of DDAC exposure on reduced susceptibility to other biocides depended on the biocide type 160 tested. Reduced susceptibilities were more pronounced for QAC disinfectants (BC and the commercial biocide 161 formulation containing DDAC). Interestingly, adaptation to DDAC did not induce reduced susceptibilities to peroxydes (H_2O_2) and chlorine releasing agents (NaOCl) among the bacterial species tested. This phenomenon is 162 163 explained by the different action mechanisms of DDAC and oxidizing agents. It was shown that peroxides like H₂O₂ generate hydroxyl radicals which may interact with metabolic pathways in microbial cells, probably leading 164 165 to a lack of development of bacteria resistance or decreasing susceptibility (Ikai et al., 2013)

7

167 A growing concern is the possibility that mechanisms providing reduced susceptibility to biocides may also provide cross-protection to clinically important antibiotics (Russell, 2002). Indeed, strains can move from the 168 category of "sensitive" to that of "resistant" according to the CLSI (Clinical Laboratory Standard Institute) 169 170 guidelines on antimicrobial susceptibility testing. In this study, MICs increased by 4-fold for erythromycin and 171 ciprofloxacin in two Campylobacter coli strains following adaptation to DDAC. A previous work found that the 172 resistance of ciprofloxacin increased only by 2-fold after 5 passages in presence of BC for one Campylobacter coli 173 strain (Mavri and Mozina, 2013). Furthermore, the authors showed that in 29% of cases, after step-wise exposure 174 to biocides, the *Campylobacter* strains were indeed more susceptible to the tested antimicrobials than the parent 175 and the control non-exposed strains.

176 The impact of DDAC exposure on reduced susceptibility was stronger in *Escherichia coli* than in the other species, 177 in terms of antibiotics numbers and of magnitude. The highest MIC increase factor was of 32-fold for 178 chloramphenicol, and 85% of the tested strains having acquired the resistance to this antibiotic. Similar results 179 were found in a previous study where 90% of Escherichia coli strains became resistant to phenicol compounds 180 following adaptation to different QACs (Soumet et al., 2012). Other classes of antibiotic showing a marked 181 increase in resistance were penicillins (ampicillin), cephalosporins (cefotaxime and ceftazidime) and 182 fluoroquinolones (ciprofloxacin). The three last classes were also identified by Capita et al. (2014), after exposure 183 of Escherichia coli ATCC 12806 to sublethal concentrations of food-grade biocides. DDAC is able to induce 184 resistance mechanisms that confer cross-resistance to different antibiotics categories due to common resistance 185 mechanisms. These mechanisms may include increased efflux by AcrAB-TolC, AcrEF-TolC and YhiUV-TolC 186 pumps of Escherichia coli present on chromosome or on mobile genetic elements resulting in expulsion of 187 antibiotics and biocides out of the cell (Ortega Morente et al., 2013). They also may be associated with cell 188 permeability changes due to modifications of outer membrane fatty acid profiles or reduction of entry channels 189 like porins. Our study revealed an increase in resistance to fluoroquinolones after adaptation to DDAC which are 190 critically important drugs for treating serious Escherichia coli infections in humans. Furthermore, the movement 191 of strains from the category of "sensitive" to that of "resistant" observed for cephalosporins is also a matter of 192 concern, as these compounds are the front-line antimicrobials for treating serious bacterial human infections. The 193 evolution of antibiotic susceptibility was low in Listeria monocytogenes strains in the present work (with only one 194 strain on 31 becoming resistant to tetracycline). That is consistent with a previous study where no resistance to 195 antibiotics was found in this species (Soumet et al., 2005). Compared to Listeria monocytogenes, increases in

196 antibiotic MIC values were more pronounced in Salmonella strains (with the highest increase of 32-fold for 197 nalidixic acid in one strain). Resistances to antibiotics were nevertheless acquired for only seven out of 35 198 Salmonella strains. Braoudaki and Hilton (2004) also found a low degree of resistance to a range of antibiotics in 199 Salmonella serovar Typhimurium following adaptation to BC. Reduced susceptibility to several antibiotics was 200 also observed after exposure of Salmonella Typhimurium strains to a biocidal formulation containing a QAC 201 (Karatzas et al., 2007). Some mutants of this study showed elevated acrB expression consistent with the Multi-Antibiotic Resistance (MAR) phenotype. In another study, the derepression of the AcrEF multidrug efflux pump 202 203 genes generated MAR phenotype for strains of Salmonella Typhimurium exposed to four different biocides 204 (Whitehead et al., 2011).

- 205 This work has provided new data on susceptibilities to several biocides and antibiotics for a large number of strains
- 206 isolated from pork production. However, more strains per bacterial species should be analysed as it was reported
- 207 that reduced susceptibility to antimicrobials seemed to differ depending on the serotype of *Listeria monocytogenes*
- and Salmonella enterica (Aase et al., 2000, Braoudaki and Hilton, 2004, Condell et al., 2012, Xu et al., 2014).

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211

212 **Conflict of Interest**

213 No conflict of interest declared.

214

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- **Table 1:** Bacterial species and origin of the strains tested

Bacterial species	Serotypes	N° of isolates	N° of isolates	Total
		from pig feces	from pork meat	
		(slaughterhouse)	(retail)	
Frahariahia coli		54	0	54
Campylobacter coli *	-	16	0	16
Salmonella enterica	Derby†	7	8	15
	Typhimurium	2	18	20
Listeria monocytogenes	1/2 a	5	8	13
	1/2 b	3	5	8
	1/2 c	0	1	1
	4b	3	6	9
Total		00	16	126

279 *: All *Campylobacter* in the French pig production are *Campylobacter coli*.

280 †: The serotypes Derby and Typhimurium are two of the most prevalent serotypes of *Salmonella* in the French

281 pig production

Table 2 Biocide MIC increase factor for different bacteria species after exposure to increasing concentrations
of DDAC.

287

Species (N° of strains)	DDAC (%)	BC (%)	Galox	NaOCl (%)	$H_2O_2(\%)$
			Horizon (%)		
Escherichia coli (54)*	≥ 3 (50) [†]	≥3 (22)	≥3 (65)	< 2 (100)	< 2 (100)
Listeria monocytogenes (31)	≥ 3 (48)	≥ 3 (45)	≥3 (35)	< 2 (100)	< 2 (100)
Salmonella enterica (35)	≥3 (3)	≥ 1.5 (37)	≥3 (6)	< 1.5 (100)	< 1.5 (100)
Campylobacter coli (16)	2 (31)	3 (31)	3 (31)	< 2 (100)	< 2 (100)

288

289 DDAC: didecyl dimethyl ammonium chloride; BC: benzalkonium chloride; NaOCI: sodium hypochlorite;

290 H₂O₂: hydrogen peroxide; Galox Horizon: biocide formulation containing DDAC and glutaraldehyde

^{*}: number of strains tested for a given species; †: percentage of strains with the biocide MIC increase factor

indicated indicated

293

Table 3: Antibiotic resistant patterns for strains of *Salmonella enterica* Derby and Typhimurium before and after
 exposure to DDAC

Serotypes of Salmonella		Antibiotic resistance patterns	Number of
enterica	Before adaptation	After adaptation	resistance
Derby	STR-TET	STR-TET-CHL	1
	AMP-CHL-STR-TET-TMP	AMP-CHL-STR-TET-TMP-FFN	1
	No resistance	STR	1
	STR-TET	STR-TET-CHL-FFN	2
	No resistance	CHL-NAL-STR	3
Typhimurium	STR-TET-TMP	STR-TET-TMP-CIP	1
	TET-TMP	TET-TMP-CIP	1

300 AMP: ampicillin; CHL: chloramphenicol; FFN: florfenicol; STR: streptomycin; TET: tetracycline; TMP:

301 trimethoprim; NAL: nalidixic acid; CIP: ciprofloxacin. Antibiotics in bold represent the acquired resistances

302 after exposure to DDAC

306	Figure 1 Evolution of antibiotic resistance patterns of <i>Escherichia coli</i> strains after step-wise exposure to DDAC.
307	(A) Distribution of the strains before (white bars) and after (grey bars) adaptation to DDAC depending on their
308	number of antibiotic resistances. (B) Distribution of the strains depending on their number of antibiotic acquired
309	resistances following adaptation to DDAC.
310	
311	
312	
313	Figure 2 Number of <i>Escherichia coli</i> strains resistant to antibiotics before (white bars) and after (grey bars)
314	adaptation to DDAC.
315	*:significant differences (p<0.05) - TET: tetracycline; STR: streptomycin; SMX: sulfamethoxazole; TMP:
316	trimethoprim; AMP: ampicillin; CHL: chloramphenicol; NAL: nalidixic acid; CIP: ciprofloxacin; FOT:
317	cefotaxime; GEN: gentamicin; TAZ: ceftazidime.
318	
319	
320	Table 1: Bacterial species and origin of the strains tested
321	
322	
323	Table 2 Biocide MIC increase factor for different bacteria species after exposure to increasing concentrations
324	of DDAC.
325	
326	
327	Table 3: Antibiotic resistant patterns for strains of Salmonella enterica Derby and Typhimurium before and after
328	exposure to DDAC
329	
330	
331	Table S1: Antibiotic susceptibility testing conditions for different bacterial species
332	
333	
334	Figure S1: Evolution of biocide MIC before and after adaptation to DDAC in different bacterial species
335	

Table S1: Antibiotic susceptibility testing conditions for different bacterial species

Escherichia coli

Antibiotic	Concentration
	range (µg/ml)
Nalidixic acid (NAL)	2 - 128
Ampicillin (AMP)	1 - 128
Cefotaxime (FOT)	0.03 - 4
Ceftazidime (TAZ)	0.06 - 8
Chloramphenicol (CHL)	4 - 256
Ciprofloxacin (CIP)	0.008 - 8
Colistin (COL)	0.5 - 16
Gentamicin (GEN)	0.05 - 32
Meropenem (MER)	0.12 - 0.25
Streptomycin (STR)	4 - 256
Sulfamethoxazole (SMX)	8 - 1024
Tetracycline (TET)	1 - 128
Trimethoprim (TMP)	0.25 - 32

Salmonella enterica

Antibiotic	Concentration
	range(µg/ml)
Sulfamethoxazole (SMX)	8 -1024
Gentamicin (GEN)	0.25 - 32
Ciprofloxacin (CIP)	0.008 - 8
Ampicillin (AMP)	0.5 - 32
Cefotaxime (FOT)	0.06 - 4
Ceftazidime (TAZ)	0.25 - 16
Tetracycline (TET)	1 - 64
Streptomycin (STR)	2-128
Trimethoprim (TMP)	0.5 - 32
Chloramphenicol (CHL)	2 - 64
Colistin (COL)	2 - 4
Florfenicol (FFN)	2-64
Kanamycin (KAN)	4 - 128
Nalidixic acid (NAL)	4 - 64

Antibiotic	Concentration
	range (µg/ml)
Moxifloxacin (MXF)	1 - 8
Levofloxacin (LEVO)	0.5 - 4
Tetracycline (TET)	1 - 8
Cefuroxime (FUR)	0.5 - 4
Ceftriaxone (AXO)	0.12 - 2
Cefotaxime (FOT)	0.12 - 4
Daptomycin (DAP)	0.06 - 2
Chloramphenicol (CHL)	1 – 32
Penicillin (PEN)	0.03 - 4
Meropenem (MER)	0.0.25 - 2
Ertapenem (ETP)	0.5 - 4
Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid 2/1 (AUG2)	2/1 - 16/8
Linezolid (LZD)	0.25 - 4
Clindamycin (CLI)	0.12 - 1
Cefepime (FEP)	0.5 - 8
Tigecycline (TGC)	0.015 - 0.12
Azithromycin (AZI)	0.25 - 2
Erythromycin (ERY)	0.25 - 2
Trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (SXT)	0.5/9.5 - 4/76
Vancomycin (VAN)	0.5 - 4

Campylobacter coli

364 Listeria monocytogenes

Antibiotic	Concentration range (µg/ml)
Gentamicin (GEN)	0.12 – 16
Streptomycin (STR)	1 – 16
Ciprofloxacin (CIP)	0.06 - 4
Tetracycline (TET)	0.25 - 16
Erythromycin (ERY)	0.5 - 32
Nalidixic acid (NAL)	2 - 64
Chloramphenicol (CHL)	2 - 64

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Figure S1: Evolution of biocide MIC before and after adaptation to DDAC in different bacterial species

A- Escherichia coli



B- Salmonella enterica



C- Listeria monocytogenes



D- Campylobacter coli







Figure 2

