

BEBPA'S 

# HALLOWEEN HORRORS



**Assays that have scared  
and scarred you!**

# **The Curse of the Hot Wells**

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**Who: Louise Pritchett**

**Assay Type:**  Binding  Cell-Based  Animal-Assay  Other  
(Please fill in)

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-  A cell-based assay was transferred to QC labs and initially seemed routine.
-  Luminescence quantified on a (pre-historic) scintillation reader
-  Unexpected “hot wells” appeared—high values in outer wells.
-  The hot wells shifted location depending on the analyst. In a seemingly consistently random pattern
-  The issue mysteriously disappeared—then reappeared in later assays.
-  Extensive troubleshooting followed:
  - Reagents & consumables were refreshed, techniques scrutinized, lab deep cleaned, contamination eliminated, liquid handler was re-tubed, plate reader was repeatedly serviced and performance qualified (PQ'd).
-  A joking reference to “lucky underpants” hinted at a deeper issue.
-  Hot wells matched the handprint of the operator → static-prone fabrics (polyester, fleece, tights) = a shocking situation.
  -  Root cause: static electricity.
-  **Solution:**
  - Discharge static before handling plates & avoid wearing static-prone clothing—especially the “cursed underpants.”



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