



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CONTACT: Anita Gore
(916) 440-7259

California Department of Public Health Reminds Consumers To Properly Handle and Cook Raw Poultry

SACRAMENTO - Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and state health officer, reminds consumers that they can protect themselves from illness caused by *Salmonella* and safely eat chicken by following the proper precautions when handling and cooking poultry.

The reminder comes as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Inspection Service (FSIS) on October 7, 2013, issued a [public health alert](#) warning consumers of illnesses caused by the bacteria *Salmonella* and associated with the consumption of chicken processed by three Foster Farms facilities in California. The CDPH has not requested Foster Farms to recall chickens because, with proper handling and preparation, this product is safe for consumption.

“Chicken is a raw animal protein that is expected to have some level of naturally occurring bacteria present. Cooking chicken fully to 165 degrees Fahrenheit will kill the bacteria that are present. Provided that consumers do not cross-contaminate fully cooked chicken with raw chicken juices, it is safe to consume,” said Dr. Chapman.

For the past several months, CDPH, in coordination with State and local health departments, the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the USDA-FSIS, has been investigating illnesses due to infections with several strains of *Salmonella* Heidelberg thought to be associated with consumption of chicken. Some of these strains have been found to be resistant to several antibiotics. The link between chicken consumption and illness, and the link to chicken produced by Foster Farms, was made through an intensive investigation which included patient interviews, product traceback, and environmental testing. While it is not uncommon for raw poultry from any producer to contain *Salmonella*, the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria is unusual.

CDC, USDA, CDPH and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) continue to work with Foster Farms to ensure proper manufacturing processes and to ensure proper interventions are in place to reduce the presence of bacteria.

Between March 1, 2013 and October 7, 2013, a total of 278 persons infected with seven outbreak strains of *Salmonella* Heidelberg in 17 states have been identified. The majority of ill persons have been identified in California. A total of 213 California patients have been identified in 34 counties. Of the California patients from whom information is available, illness onset dates ranged from March 1 to September 24, 2013. The age of

these patients ranges from 1 month to 93 years, with a median of 18 years. Approximately 45 percent have been hospitalized, and there have been no deaths. [CDC has developed a Web page to provide updates on this investigation.](#)

Symptoms of *Salmonella* infection include fever, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea which may be bloody. Most infected people recover within a week; however, some may develop complications that require hospitalization. Infants, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are at highest risk for more severe illness. Additional information concerning Salmonella can be found on the [CDPH Web page](#). People who develop symptoms of *Salmonella* infection should consult their healthcare provider.

Salmonella and other bacteria such as *Campylobacter*, can be found on raw poultry. CDPH, CDC and USDA-FSIS recommend the following food safety tips to prevent infections from raw poultry:

Clean

- Wash hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- Wash utensils, cutting boards, dishes, and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to prepare the next item.
- Food contact surfaces may be sanitized with a freshly made solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water.

Separate

- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator.
- If possible, use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

Cook

- Cook poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F as measured with a food thermometer.

Chill

- Chill food promptly and properly. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within 2 hours (or 1 hour if temperatures are above 90°F).

Visit this CDPH link for more [food safety tips](#), including proper cooking temperatures. The CDC also has helpful tips on what you can do to [protect yourself and your family while handling food](#).

Consumers can also access the national Partnership for Food Safety Education's ["Fight BAC" \(bacteria\) Web page](#).

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