



Ohio Department of Agriculture and Ohio Department of Health



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To: Health Commissioners, Environmental Health Directors, Nursing Directors,
ODA Food Safety Specialists, and Other Interested Parties

Subject: FDA Extends Consumer Warning on Serrano Peppers from Mexico

Date: July 31, 2008

FDA Extends Consumer Warning on Serrano Peppers from Mexico

Laboratory testing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has confirmed that both a sample of serrano pepper and a sample of irrigation water collected by agency investigators on a farm in the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico, contain *Salmonella* Saintpaul with the same genetic fingerprint as the strain of bacteria that is causing the current outbreak in the United States.

As a result, until further notice, the FDA is advising consumers to avoid raw serrano peppers from Mexico, in addition to raw jalapeño peppers from Mexico, and any foods that contain them.

The test results are part of the FDA's continuing intensive investigation into the outbreak of *Salmonella* Saintpaul. The investigation has involved tracing back, through complex distribution channels, the origins of products associated with clusters of illness in the United States, as well as inspections and evaluation of farms and facilities in this country and in Mexico, and the collection and testing of environmental and product samples. One of these tracebacks led to a packing facility in Mexico, and to a particular farm, where the agency obtained the samples.

Previously, FDA inspectors collected a positive sample of jalapeño pepper from a produce-distribution center owned by Agricola Zaragosa in McAllen, Texas. The FDA continues to work on pinpointing where and how in the supply chain this first positive jalapeño pepper sample became contaminated. It originated from a different farm in Mexico than the positive samples of serrano pepper and irrigation water.

The FDA is still analyzing many of the samples taken at various farms in Mexico. If laboratory results warrant, the FDA will provide consumers with additional cautions or warnings necessary to protect their health.

On July 17, the FDA announced it had determined that fresh tomatoes now available in the domestic market are not associated with the current outbreak. As a result, the agency removed its June 7 warning against eating certain types of red raw tomatoes.

For more information consult
<http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html>.