



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: Issues Public Health Alert For Frozen, Stuffed Raw Chicken Products

Date: October 6, 2008

Issues Public Health Alert For Frozen, Stuffed Raw Chicken Products

WASHINGTON,- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is issuing a public health alert due to concerns about illness caused by *Salmonella* that may be associated with raw, frozen, breaded and pre-browned, stuffed chicken entrees.

This public health alert was initiated after an investigation and testing conducted by the Minnesota Department of Health and Minnesota Department of Agriculture determined there is an association between products such as chicken cordon blue and chicken breast kiev and 32 illnesses in Minnesota and 11 other states. The illnesses were linked through the epidemiological investigation by their PFGE pattern (DNA fingerprint).

Although many of these stuffed chicken entrees were labeled with instructions identifying the product was uncooked and did not include microwave instruction for preparation, individuals who became ill did not follow the cooking instructions and reportedly used a microwave to prepare the product.

FSIS is reminding consumers of the critical importance of following package cooking instructions for frozen, stuffed raw chicken products and general food safety guidelines when handling and preparing any raw meat or poultry. It is especially important to use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of these chicken products such that all points of measurement are at least 165° F.

All poultry products should be cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165° F as determined by a food thermometer. Using a food thermometer is the only way to know that food has reached a high enough temperature to destroy foodborne bacteria.

Frozen, raw, breaded and pre-browned stuffed chicken products covered by this alert and similar products, may be stuffed or filled, breaded or browned and therefore appear to be cooked. These items may be labeled "chicken cordon bleu," "chicken kiev" or chicken breast stuffed with cheese, vegetables or other items.

Consumption of food contaminated with *Salmonella* can cause salmonellosis, one of the most common bacterial foodborne illnesses. *Salmonella* infections can be life-threatening, especially to those with weak immune systems, such as infants, the elderly and persons with HIV infection or undergoing chemotherapy. The most common symptoms of salmonellosis are diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever within eight to 72 hours. Additional symptoms may be chills, headache, nausea and vomiting that can last up to seven days.

Consumers with food safety questions can "Ask Karen," the FSIS virtual representative available 24 hours a day at AskKaren.gov. The toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) is available in English and Spanish and can be reached from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day.

Recommendations for Preventing Salmonellosis

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline
1-888-MPHOTLINE or visit
www.fsis.usda.gov

Wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw meat and poultry. Also wash cutting boards, dishes and utensils with hot soapy water. Clean up spills right away.

Keep raw meat, fish and poultry away from other food that will not be cooked. Use separate cutting boards for raw meat, poultry and egg products and cooked foods.

Cook raw meat and poultry to safe internal temperatures before eating. The safe internal temperature for meat such as beef and pork is 160° F, and 165° F for poultry, as determined with a food thermometer.

Refrigerate raw meat and poultry within two hours after purchase (one hour if temperatures exceed 90° F). Refrigerate cooked meat and poultry within two hours after cooking.