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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA Issues a Public Health Alert for Chicken Products from Three Foster Farms Facilities

(JUNEAU, AK) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) has issued a public health alert due to concerns that illness caused by strains of Salmonella Heidelberg are associated with raw chicken products produced by three facilities in California.

Foster Farms brand raw chicken products from the facilities in question bear one of the establishment numbers inside a USDA mark of inspection or elsewhere on the package:

- "P6137"
- "P6137A"
- "P7632"

The products were mainly distributed to California, Oregon, and Washington State. Although not confirmed, these products may have been distributed to Alaska.

The public health alert is being issued after an estimated 278 illnesses were recently reported in 18 states, predominantly in California since June of 2013. Alaska has reported 14 cases with a direct link to this outbreak. At this point in the investigation, the USDA FSIS is unable to link illnesses to a specific product and a specific production period.

Consumers can access more information regarding this ongoing outbreak at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/heidelberg-10-13/index.html>

Salmonella is a common cause of foodborne illness, accounting for between 50 and 100 reported illnesses in Alaska each year, and likely many more unreported cases. Symptoms of Salmonella illness usually include diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps. The symptoms usually begin one to three days after exposure, and the illness usually lasts four to seven days. Most people recover on their own without medical treatment. Some people do need medical care. Serious infections can occur, particularly in the very young, the elderly and in

people who have a weakened immune system. People who have severe symptoms such as bloody or long-lasting diarrhea should contact their health care provider.

There are many sources of Salmonella bacteria, but poultry is a common source. Salmonella in raw chicken is not limited to any one brand, and current USDA regulations allow the sale of raw poultry that contains Salmonella, so any raw or undercooked chicken should be presumed to have potential bacterial contamination. In most cases of Salmonella illness, known as salmonellosis, a source is not identified.

Each year, hundreds of Alaskans become sick due to food being prepared in an unsafe manner. Follow these precautions to help prevent foodborne illness from poultry:

- Keep raw poultry separate from other foods (especially fruits and vegetables) in your shopping cart, grocery bags, and refrigerator. Put poultry into a plastic bag to prevent drips that may contaminate other food.
- Be careful not to let drippings from poultry, packaging, cutting boards, or utensils, contaminate dishes or other surfaces in your kitchen. Cross-contamination can be a source of illness for anyone, even people who don't eat poultry.
- Cook poultry to 165°F. Be sure poultry is thawed before cooking. Frozen or partially frozen meat is easy to undercook.
- Always wash your hands after handling poultry. Use warm water, soap and paper towels for hands. Wash utensils with warm soapy water, rinse then apply a mild bleach (1 teaspoon bleach per gallon of water) solution to sanitize utensils, cutting surfaces, and countertops.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Alaska Section of Epidemiology are working with other agencies to track foodborne illnesses in our state. New cases of Salmonella infection, or any clusters of foodborne illness, should be reported to the Alaska Section of Epidemiology at (907)269-8000 or (800)478-0084.

For more information on food safety for Alaskans, visit DEC's website:

<http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/index.htm>

For more information on foodborne illnesses for Alaskans, visit the Section of Epidemiology's website at:

<http://www.epi.alaska.gov/id/dod/foodwater/default.htm>

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