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For Immediate Release:
Aug. 5, 2011

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Department of Health Reminds People to Take Precautions when Preparing Poultry Products

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health is reminding residents to follow food safety guidelines when preparing all poultry products to prevent illness. To date, the Department of Health’s Scientific Lab has identified four samples of the strain of Salmonella Heidelberg related to the current national outbreak. There are no human cases in New Mexico related to the national outbreak and Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation is recalling the products that may be contaminated.

“The Department of Health is working with state and federal partners to carefully monitor the current national outbreak for any human cases related to the national outbreak. The best way to protect yourself and your family from food borne illnesses is to carefully follow proper hygiene, handling and food preparation guidelines,” Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres said.

Dr. Mack Sewell, director of the Department of Health’s Epidemiology and Response Division, said the Department routinely tests samples of meat products from around the state as part of a national study and salmonella and campylobacter bacteria are common, especially in poultry products.

The Department of Health recommends the following food safety guidelines:

- Wash hands, kitchen work surfaces, and utensils with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry including frozen, fresh ground turkey. Then, disinfect the food contact surfaces using a freshly prepared solution of one tablespoon unscented liquid chlorine bleach to one gallon of water.
- Cook poultry thoroughly. Ground turkey and ground turkey dishes should always be cooked to 165 °F internal temperature as measured with a food thermometer; leftovers also should be reheated to 165 °F. The color of cooked poultry is not always a sure sign of its safety.



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- Only by using a food thermometer can one accurately determine that poultry has reached a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F throughout the product. Turkey can remain pink even after cooking to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F. The meat of smoked turkey is always pink.
- Be particularly careful with foods prepared for infants, older adults, and persons with impaired immune systems.
- If served undercooked poultry in a restaurant, send it back to the kitchen for further cooking.
- Avoid cross-contaminating other foods. Uncooked meats should be kept separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods. Hands, cutting boards, counters, knives, and other utensils should be washed thoroughly after touching uncooked foods.
- Hands should be washed before handling food and between handling different food items.
- Refrigerate raw and cooked meat and poultry within 2 hours after purchase (one hour if temperatures exceed 90° F).
- Refrigerate cooked meat and poultry within two hours after cooking. Refrigerators should be set to maintain a temperature of 40 °F or below.

The New Mexico Environment Department has been in contact with all grocery store chains in the state that may have carried the potentially contaminated products. Most, if not all, of the affected products have been pulled from the shelves. The Environment Department will continue to do spot checks at various grocery stores to ensure no remaining product is available for sale.

The New Mexico Environment Department's Recall Notice can be found at:

http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/Food_Program/

The USDA Recall Notice can be found at:

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Recall_060_2011_Release/index.asp