

Turkey Recall Is Reminder to Follow Food Safety Practices

Written by Joy Venhorst

Thursday, 11 August 2011 23:46

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AMES, Iowa – As consumers check their refrigerators and freezers for recalled fresh and frozen ground turkey products, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach encourages following food safety best practices all the time.

“Food recalls and salmonella outbreaks certainly get people thinking more about food safety,” said Catherine Strohbahn, an ISU Extension specialist and professor in hotel, restaurant and institution management. “However, Iowans should always be mindful about food safety when purchasing, storing, preparing and serving food. That’s why Iowa State provides consumers, foodservice operators, students and educators with 24/7 access to research-based, unbiased information on food safety and quality at www.iowafoodsafety.org.”

On Aug. 3, Cargill initiated a voluntary recall of approximately 36 million pounds of ground turkey products produced at its Springdale, Ark., plant, as reported on the Cargill News Center website. As of Aug. 4, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that 78 people in 26 states had been confirmed with SalmonellaHeidelberg infections and that eating ground turkey was the likely source of this outbreak. One person from Iowa has been affected. CDC provides a summary of the situation at <http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/heidelberg/index.html>.

“Symptoms of most salmonella infections are the usual of any foodborne illness — diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps manifesting eight to 72 hours after ingesting the contaminated food. Affected individuals also may experience chills, headaches and sustained vomiting. Many of these symptoms are similar to those experienced with the flu, so often people don’t realize

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they have a foodborne illness,” Strohbehn said. If symptoms persist, see a doctor.

Cargill has posted a list of recalled ground turkey products at <http://www.cargill.com/news-center/news-releases/2011/NA3047807.jsp>

, Strohbehn noted. Consumers should return opened or unopened packages to the store where purchased for a full refund.

Strohbehn recommends the following general food safety best practices:

Cook foods thoroughly to recommended end point temperatures. For poultry, this is a minimum of 165 F. Use a meat thermometer rather than relying only on cooking times listed on the package, because oven temperature sensors will vary. Looking and touching are not good indicators of doneness — only a calibrated thermometer can tell for sure.

Keep cold foods cold either by refrigeration (below 41 F) or by freezing. Put cold foods away after shopping first, rather than after canned goods. Don't leave potentially hazardous foods out at room temperature for more than two hours. In summer, don't leave these foods out for more than one hour.

Separate raw from cooked or ready-to-eat foods, and separate clean from soiled — chefs use the term *mise en place*, or everything in its place. Be mindful of this concept when working in the kitchen.

Keep it clean. Keep hands clean and keep materials that contact food clean. Clean means washing and rinsing using cleaning cloths and brushes designated for food surfaces only. Consumers may wish to sanitize certain surfaces after cleaning, such as the cutting board. Use a ratio of 1 tablespoon of unscented bleach with 1 gallon of water and allow contact for at least 7 seconds. Let the product air dry.

More information is available from the ISU Extension Food Safety Project website, www.iowafoodsafety.org.

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