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Updates on H5N1 Beef Safety Studies

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What's New

May 1, 2024: USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is announcing results from its testing of retail ground beef. FSIS collected 30 samples of ground beef from retail outlets in the states with dairy cattle herds that had tested positive for the H5N1 influenza virus at the time of sample collection. The samples were sent to APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) for PCR testing. On May 1, NVSL reported that all samples tested negative for H5N1. These results reaffirm that the meat supply is safe.

Background

USDA is confident that the meat supply is safe. USDA has a rigorous meat inspection process, where USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) veterinarians are present at all federal livestock slaughter facilities. FSIS inspects each animal before slaughter, and all cattle carcasses must pass inspection after slaughter and be determined to be fit to enter the human food supply.

While we have multiple safeguards in place to protect consumers, we recommend consumers properly handle raw meats and cook to a safe internal temperature. Cooking to a safe internal temperature kills bacteria and viruses in meat. Specific recommendations are available online at: [Safe Minimum Internal Temperature Chart](#)

Ongoing Research

To verify the safety of the meat supply in the context of H5N1, USDA's FSIS, APHIS, and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) are working on three separate beef safety studies related to avian influenza in meat from dairy cattle. These studies are taking place in the interest of scientific inquiry and reaffirm consumer confidence.

1. **Samples of ground beef obtained at retail in the affected States:** Final results were posted on May 1, 2024. Samples were collected at retail outlets in the States in which dairy cattle herds have tested positive for H5N1 influenza virus. The samples were analyzed by APHIS using polymerase chain reaction (PCR), to indicate whether any viral particles were present. **No virus particles were found to be present.**
2. **Beef muscle sampling of cull dairy cows condemned at select FSIS-inspected slaughter facilities:** FSIS is currently collecting muscle samples at FSIS-inspected slaughter facilities of cull dairy cattle that have been condemned for systemic pathologies. The samples will be analyzed by APHIS using PCR to determine presence of viral particles. The results are forthcoming and will be posted as soon as they become available.
3. **Ground beef cooking study:** ARS will be conducting a beef cooking study and will be using a virus surrogate in ground beef and cooking it at different temperatures to determine log-reduction of the virus. The results will be posted as soon as they become available.