

FSIS ISSUES PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT FOR GROUND BEEF PRODUCTS DUE TO POSSIBLE *SALMONELLA* CONTAMINATION

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20, 2007 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is issuing a public health alert due to illnesses from *Salmonella* Newport associated with fresh ground beef products contaminated with multi-drug resistant *Salmonella* that may have been ground and sold at Safeway supermarkets in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and New Mexico between Sept. 19 and Nov. 5, 2007.

This public health alert was initiated after epidemiological investigations and a case control study conducted by the California Department of Public Health, Arizona Department of Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, determined that there is an association between the fresh ground beef products and 38 illnesses reported in Arizona (16), California (18), Idaho (1) and Nevada (3). The illnesses were linked through the epidemiological investigation by their rare PFGE pattern found in PulseNet, a database maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This alert is being issued after an exhaustive and continuing investigation whereby FSIS could not identify specific establishments, lots and products that would be subject to a recall. FSIS has no reason to believe that these products are still available for sale in commerce.

Consumers that may have purchased these fresh ground beef products between Sept. 19 and Nov. 5, 2007, and stored them in the freezer should look for and discard or destroy these products if they find them.

FSIS would like to remind consumers of the importance of following food safety guidelines when handling and preparing raw meat. Ground beef should be cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature of 160° Fahrenheit.

This particular strain of *Salmonella* is resistant to many commonly prescribed drugs, which can increase the risk of hospitalization or possible treatment failure in infected individuals.

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 manifestations 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.

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.

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.

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NOTE: Access news releases and other information at FSIS’ Web site at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>.