Popular Dog Chews Linked to Salmonella Outbreak in 13 States

Health officials believe pig ear dog treats are the likeliest source of an outbreak that has sickened 45 people this month.

July 11, 2019 By Alicia Green

Health officials have announced that contact with pig ear dog treats may be the source of an ongoing multistate outbreak of salmonella, a common bacterial infection that affects the intestinal tract, reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Forty-five people were reported to be infected with the outbreak strain of salmonella in California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Wisconsin. Of those affected, 12 people were hospitalized; no deaths have been reported.

According to the CDC, epidemiologic evidence bacteria indicated that pig ear dog treats were the most likely source of the outbreak.

Investigators learned from interviews that 34 of 38 people who became ill reported interacting with a dog. Of 24 people with available information, 17 confirmed having contact with pig ear dog treats or with dogs that had been fed these treats.

Officials from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development sampled pig ears for salmonella and identified other strains of the bacteria but not the germ that caused the outbreak. As a result, pig ears were removed from retail locations where sampling occurred. In addition, pet store chain Pet Supplies Plus recalled bulk pig ears stocked in open bins.

At press time, investigators hadn't yet identified a common supplier of pig ear dog treats. But the CDC said the agency would update the public when more information becomes available.

In the meantime, the agency advised dog owners to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after handling pet food or treats and to place pet food away from where human food is stored and prepared.

Additionally, the CDC stressed that people shouldn't let dogs lick their mouths, faces or any open wounds or areas with broken skin after eating. Also, the agency recommended individuals contact

a veterinarian if a dog shows signs of salmonella infection, such as fever or diarrhea with blood or mucus or seems more tired than usual.

Symptoms of salmonella infection in humans include diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps 12 to 72 hours after exposure to the bacteria. The infection can spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and elsewhere in the body. The illness generally lasts between four to seven days, and most people recover without treatment.

For similar coverage about salmonella outbreaks, read "Good Eggs" and "Doctors Warn: Trendy 'Raw Water' Can Put People at Risk for Hepatitis."

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