

Officials say tomatoes cause of salmonella illness

- By Marcus Clem Atchison Globe
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ATCHISON, Kansas — Contaminated tomatoes are responsible for nearly 70 confirmed cases of gastrointestinal illness that caused several hospitalizations last month affecting attendees of a church dinner in Highland, Kansas.

Theresa Freed, deputy secretary of public affairs for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, said investigators tested each dinner item served as part of an Indian taco feast on Aug. 7 at the First United Methodist Presbyterian Church in Highland after the salmonella outbreak became known. They have now ruled out every food item except tomatoes, Freed said.

“Testing of food that was served at the dinner has been completed and all tested negative for salmonella except for a sample of tomatoes that tested positive for the same strain of salmonella Newport,” Freed said, referencing one of the common strains of the pathogen.

The development poses a new concern for the department because various residents brought the tomatoes from different locations. Freed didn’t immediately answer questions from *Atchison Globe* on how great of a danger still exists, how many resources her department is devoting to the matter and when a final report may be completed.

“KDHE is assessing whether other persons that didn’t attend the taco dinner could have been sickened from consuming these tomatoes,” Freed said.

The KDHE and the Doniphan County Health Department, which is assisting in the investigation, have relied on community input via an online survey that appears to no longer be active. Freed said a grand total of 115 persons completed the survey, and 69

reported they had become sick after attending the taco dinner. Fourteen victims have clinically tested positive for salmonella Newport.

For more information, call the Doniphan County Health Department at *785-985-3591* or the KDHE Epidemiology Hotline at *877-427-7317*. Information on salmonella may be found at www.cdc.gov/salmonella.

SOURCE: http://www.newspressnow.com/news/local_news/officials-say-tomatoes-cause-of-salmonella-illness/article_700a14b9-1541-57c9-a198-e4559251067a.html