

Cantaloupes Identified as Source of Salmonella Infection in Tennessee

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Tennessee Departments of Health, Agriculture Investigating Multi-State Outbreak

NASHVILLE – The Tennessee departments of Health and Agriculture are alerting Tennesseans about an ongoing outbreak of *Salmonella* linked to cantaloupes grown in southwestern Indiana. Cantaloupes grown on one farm have tested positive for the same type of *Salmonella* causing illness in Tennessee and several other states. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and affected states are collaborating in an ongoing investigation to identify all possible sources of contamination and prevent additional cases of illness. At this point no cantaloupes grown in Tennessee have been confirmed to be involved in this outbreak.

"Tennesseans should ask about the origin of recently purchased cantaloupes and discard any cantaloupes grown in southwestern Indiana," said Deputy State Epidemiologist John Dunn, DVM, PhD. "We encourage anyone who has become ill after eating cantaloupe to see their health care provider and for providers to be mindful of patients who may have symptoms consistent with salmonellosis and report all cases to the local health department."

Persons who recently purchased cantaloupes grown in southwestern Indiana are advised not to eat them and discard any remaining cantaloupe. Consumers can contact the store where they purchased cantaloupe to ask about the origin of the fruit. Based on the available information, consumers can continue to purchase and eat cantaloupes that did not originate in southwestern Indiana. Inquiring at the point of sale is advised. Many cantaloupes have the growing area identified with a sticker on the fruit. If no sticker is present, consumers should inquire about the source.

TDH has identified six cases of *Salmonella* infection associated with this outbreak. The Tennessee patients reside in several counties; three of the patients were hospitalized.

Tennessee Department of Agriculture officials are contacting retailers and distributors in Tennessee that may have received cantaloupes grown in southwestern Indiana. Food inspectors are also collecting samples of produce for laboratory analysis. The collection and testing protocol is in addition to routine, random sampling conducted by TDA.

Salmonella infections are a common cause of foodborne illness, resulting in diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps within a couple of days of infection. Illness is most often uncomplicated but can be severe in young children, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems. Most people recover within a few days.

Salmonella is a bacterium that can be found in the intestines of animals. *Salmonella* and other foodborne bacteria can occasionally be found on produce items. The Food and Drug Administration recommends consumers routinely rinse raw produce such as fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running tap water before eating, cutting or cooking. Even if the produce will be peeled, it should still be washed first. Scrub firm produce such as melons and cucumbers with a clean produce brush. Dry the produce with a clean cloth or paper towel. Separate uncooked meats and poultry from vegetables, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods to avoid cross contamination.

Persons with questions about *Salmonella* are encouraged to contact their local health department. Find a list of Tennessee health department locations online at <http://health.state.tn.us/localdepartments.htm> (<http://health.state.tn.us/localdepartments.htm>). For more information about *Salmonella*, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/salmonella/ (<http://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/>).

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. For more information about TDH services and programs, visit <http://health.state.tn.us/> (<http://health.state.tn.us/>).

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