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FRANKLIN COUNTY

PRESS RELEASE

North Carolina Resident Tests Positive for same Salmonella Strain as that of National Outbreak

RALEIGH – North Carolina has joined the growing list of states affected by an ongoing outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium that began in early September. The N.C. divisions of Public Health and Environmental Health announced today that one North Carolinian, a resident of Robeson County, has now tested positive for the same Salmonella strain.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported Thursday (Jan. 8) that 388 persons infected with *Salmonella* Typhimurium with the same genetic fingerprint – indicating a common infection source – had been reported in 42 states. North Carolina will now be added to that list.

Most of the illnesses began between Sept. 3 and Dec. 29, 2008. According to the CDC, hospitalizations occurred in about 18 percent of the cases. No deaths were reported.

State health officials are continuing to investigate the North Carolina case, and are looking for other potential cases linked to this outbreak. Nationally, the CDC, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are working together with the states to identify the specific contaminated product, probably a food or foods, that is causing the outbreak.

Salmonella can cause fever, diarrhea (which may be bloody), nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. The illness usually lasts four to seven days. Although most people recover without treatment, severe infections may occur, particularly in young children, frail or elderly people and those with weakened immune systems.

Last year, North Carolina reported 1,569 cases of Salmonellosis, with five deaths, to the CDC.

While the source of the bacteria in this outbreak has not yet been identified, the source of previous outbreaks associated with *Salmonella* Typhimurium – the most common type of Salmonella – include poultry, produce, raw milk and cheese, and contact with with some kinds of animals, including small turtles and other reptiles.

State Epidemiologist Jeff Engel said, "Public health and others are working hard to find out what's making these people sick, but it is often difficult to identify sources of food borne outbreaks. Everyone must be asked many questions about possible exposures, and people may not remember the foods they recently ate or may not be aware of all of the ingredients in their food."

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"Safe food handling is very important to protect people from food borne illness," Dr. Engel said. He stressed that, because foods of animal origin may be contaminated with Salmonella, people should not eat raw or undercooked eggs, poultry or meat, and should not consume raw or unpasteurized milk or other unpasteurized dairy products. Produce should be thoroughly washed.

Avoid cross-contamination of foods, Engel said. Uncooked meats should be kept separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods. People should thoroughly wash their hands before handling food, and between handling different food items.

People who experience gastrointestinal illness should contact their health care provider or local health department, he said.

For the latest updates on the national outbreak, see the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov.

For additional information, contact Franklin County Health Director Eric Ireland at (919) 496-8111 or visit www.co.franklin.nc.us.

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