

Urinary tract infections linked to contaminated chicken

February 20 2012, By Shari Roan

Urinary tract infections are common conditions that occur when bacteria from the intestines enter the urinary tract. New research, however, suggests that the bacteria causing these infections may come from contaminated food - especially chickens.

While it sounds bizarre, studies from Canadian researchers show that stricter chicken-farm anti-contamination practices may help curb cases of [urinary tract infections](#). In 2010, researchers showed that the most common cause of the infections - E. coli bacteria - can originate in food. In a study published this week, the authors show that chicken is the likely culprit.

The scientists, led by Ameet R. Manges of McGill University, tested 320 samples of beef, pork and chicken. They found that the bacteria from beef and pork were far less likely to be genetically related to human urinary tract infection bacteria strains than chicken, which were closely related.

Proper kitchen handling and cooking of chicken can reduce the chances of E. coli infection. But, Manges said: "The many examples of [foodborne outbreaks](#) that occur regularly makes it clear that we still have problems with food safety."

Given the strong link between E. coli-related urinary tract infections and chicken, it makes sense for chicken farms to step up efforts to stop [bacterial contamination](#), the authors said.

E. coli is well known as a cause of diarrheal illness, but the bacteria's foodborne link to urinary tract infections should not be underestimated, they note.

"During the past decade, the emergence of drug-resistant E. coli has dramatically increased," the authors wrote. "As a consequence, the management of UTIs, which was previously straightforward, has become more complicated; the risks for [treatment failure](#) are higher, and the cost of UTI treatment is increasing."

The study appears in the March issue of the journal [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#).

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