

Danes contract *Salmonella* infections abroad

July 29 2013

In 2012 the number of *Salmonella* cases increased slightly after the record low incidence in 2011. Nearly half of the Danes who contracted *Salmonella* were infected abroad. Among people infected in Denmark, Danish pork and beef were estimated to be the major sources of *Salmonella* cases, while no cases could be attributed to Danish broiler meat.

These are some of the findings presented in the annual report on the occurrence of diseases that can be transmitted to humans from animal and food. The report is prepared by the Danish Zoonosis Centre at the National Food Institute, Technical University of Denmark in collaboration with Statens Serum Institut and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration.

In 2012, 1,198 Danes were registered with a *Salmonella* infection, which corresponds to 21 cases per 100,000 citizens. It is a little more than the record-low incidence in 2011. Nearly half (45 percent) of all *Salmonella* infections were contracted while travelling abroad. It is particularly in connection with travels to Egypt, Thailand and Turkey that Danes become infected. Approximately half of the travel-related cases originated from these three countries.

The most common type of *Salmonella* in Danes was *Salmonella typhimurium* which caused 415 cases in 2012. *Salmonella enteritidis* caused 242 cases, which was the lowest number since the action plans for combating *Salmonella* were introduced in the 1990s. Historically, this *Salmonella* type has been related to eggs, but today the majority of *S.*

enteritidis cases, 77 percent, are contracted while travelling outside of Denmark.

Danish pork and beef are the main sources

In 2012, 11 [foodborne outbreaks](#) due to *Salmonella* were recorded. Two outbreaks originated from Danish beef, one from Danish pork and one from imported duck. In the remaining seven outbreaks, the food source was unknown. An [outbreak](#) is defined by two or more persons falling ill from the same food source.

The annual *Salmonella* source account estimated Danish pork as the most important source of human salmonellosis cases (8 percent) in 2012, which was similar to 2011. Imported pork accounted for 0.2 percent of the cases in 2012. This was a large reduction compared with the two previous years where just over 5 percent of the cases were due to imported pork. Danish beef was estimated as the second-largest food source of *Salmonella* cases (7 percent) in 2012. This is a very large increase compared to the last 10 years where 0.5 to 1.5 percent of the cases were due to Danish beef.

"It is very unusual that so many cases are caused by Danish beef. The increase is due to two outbreaks caused by Danish beef and an increase in the number of sporadic cases," says Anne Wingstrand, Senior Researcher at the National Food Institute.

No Salmonella cases from Danish chicken

No cases were attributed to Danish broiler meat in the *Salmonella* source account in 2012. This is only the second time in the 18 years the Danish Zoonosis Centre at the National Food Institute has prepared the *Salmonella* source account. The most likely reasons for the low

incidence are that Danish law, since 2008, has required fresh broiler meat to be [salmonella](#)-free when put on the market.

"During the past 20 years, Denmark has focused intensely on reducing *Salmonella* on the farms as well as at the slaughterhouses. We are pleased to see that the efforts have ensured that Danes no longer contract *Salmonella* from eating Danish broiler meat. The EU also has focus on *Salmonella* and has set targets for the level of *Salmonella* in [broiler](#) flocks and egg-laying flocks", says Anne Wingstrand, Senior Researcher at the National Food Institute.

Approximately 25 percent of all *Salmonella* cases in Denmark could not be attributed to a specific [food source](#). The reason may be that the cases were caused by foods which were not included in the *Salmonella* source account, e.g. fruit and vegetables, or other sources of infection such as contact with livestock and pets.

Provided by Technical University of Denmark

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