

# USDA cracks down on salmonella in breaded stuffed raw chicken products

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture plans to get tougher on Salmonella

bacteria found in breaded, stuffed raw chicken products, the agency announced Tuesday.

About 1.35 million people are infected with Salmonella bacteria each year in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Almost a quarter of the nation's Salmonella infections are caused by eating poultry.

"USDA is taking science-based, decisive action to drive down Salmonella illnesses linked to [poultry products](#)," said Agriculture Secretary [Tom Vilsack](#) in a USDA news release. "Today's proposal represents the first step in a broader effort to control Salmonella contamination in all poultry products, as well as a continued commitment to protecting American consumers from foodborne illness."

The agency's Food Safety and Inspection Service proposed declaring Salmonella an "adulterant" if the amount in the product exceeds a very low level.

The chicken products under scrutiny can appear to be cooked because they are pre-browned and heat treated. Yet the chicken is raw, often cooked from frozen. Home cooks may not be cooking it for long enough to raise the [internal temperature](#) to a level that will kill the bacteria, the agency noted in a news release.

The products may be stuffed with raw vegetables, butter, cheese or meat, and these ingredients may cook at different rates than the chicken. These continue to be linked to Salmonella outbreaks, even with new labeling meant to better inform customers that the products are raw.

Salmonella infections cost about \$4.1 billion each year in the United

States, with loss of productivity estimated at \$88 million, the USDA said.

The proposal would consider any breaded, stuffed raw chicken products that test positive for Salmonella at 1 colony forming unit (CFU) per gram prior to stuffing and breading to be adulterated.

Inspectors would sample and test the chicken in these products prior to stuffing and breading. If the chicken does not meet this standard, that lot could not be used to produce the final breaded items. Instead, it would need to be used in other ways besides these stuffed and breaded foods.

Symptoms of Salmonella infection include diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps. The nation's most recent Salmonella outbreak, in 2021, sickened people in 11 states. Each year, Salmonella causes about 26,500 hospitalizations.

The public can comment on the proposal within 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [salmonella](#).

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