



Date: June 9, 2008

General questions: Bonnie Widerburg, 971-673-1282

Technical questions: Emilio DeBess, DHS, 971-673-1111

Oregon Dept. of Agriculture Food Product Information: 503-986-4720

Oregon cases linked to multi-state Salmonella outbreak

A multi-state salmonellosis outbreak involving contaminated tomatoes has reached Oregon, resulting in three laboratory-confirmed cases of the illness. Tests to confirm two additional cases are pending.

Two of the cases are in Umatilla and Union Counties. The third, a Washington County resident, was possibly exposed in California.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continues its investigation. Meanwhile, the FDA has publicized the sources they have determined are definitely not related to the outbreak," said Emilio DeBess, D.V.M., M.P.H., epidemiologist in the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division.

"Given the large numbers of tomatoes that are available and the relatively few number of Oregon cases, the risk is low. Consumers who wish to lower their risk can check to see if tomatoes are either locally produced or are on the FDA's "safe" list, on the Web at www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html#retailers," said DeBess. "Safe products include cherry or grape tomatoes, tomatoes sold with the vine still attached, and those grown at home."

DeBess noted that Salmonella can cause serious, sometimes fatal infections, particularly in young children, frail or elderly people and people with weakened immune systems.

The bacteria causing illnesses are Salmonella serotype Saintpaul. Oregon is working with federal and other state and local authorities on the investigation. Thus far, 166 people have been sickened and other cases are pending in 17 states – Arizona,

California, Connecticut, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin.

Salmonellosis is a bacterial infection that can cause diarrhea, fever and vomiting. Symptoms usually develop within one to five days after eating contaminated food. Most people get better without the need for medical attention although the illness can be serious for infants and the elderly.

DeBess said Oregon typically records about 15 cases of Salmonella Saintpaul each year, and Salmonella Saintpaul is one of about 2,500 serotypes of Salmonella.

###