Report into the sources of human Campylobacter infection published

A report published by the FSA confirms that chickens are the source of the majority of human cases of Campylobacter, followed by other animals such as sheep, pigs and cows. This infection may have been passed to people directly through food, but could also be via environmental and water contamination.

The Campylobacter Source Attribution Study, launched in 2015 as part of the FSA's wider and ongoing Campylobacter Reduction Programme, also reveals an increase in antimicrobial resistance within Campylobacter strains between 1997 and 2018. Work is continuing in this area to determine the full impact.

> FSA Head of science, evidence and research, Rick Mumford, said:
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> "We will use these findings to better understand the causes of Campylobacter infection, and to inform further work on foodborne transmission. This will also help to identify further research areas to explore as we seek to reduce the overall burden of Campylobacter infection in the UK."

Around 300,000 human cases of Campylobacter are estimated to be acquired from food each year in the UK, out of a total of around 630,000 cases. Campylobacter lives in the intestinal tracts of a wide range of mammals, birds and even insects.

Researchers embarked on this project to determine the key reservoirs of human Campylobacter infections and help identify potentially effective risk management strategies. The project assessed patient samples from two locations – a representative urban site in North Tyneside and rural site in Oxfordshire – alongside foods sampled from retail in York, Salisbury and London.

With regards to antimicrobial resistance, the study revealed a rise in fluoroquinolone and tetracycline resistance in C.jejuni isolates from human infections between 1997 and 2018. Fluoroquinolone resistance was more frequent in C.jejuni isolates from chicken than from other animals, whilst tetracycline resistance was more frequent in poultry and pig isolates than ruminants. Resistance to macrolides and aminoglycosides remain low.

The majority of people who are infected with Campylobacter recover fully and quickly, but it can cause long-term and severe health problems in some, including young children and the elderly.

You can help keep your family safe by cooking your food correctly, and avoiding cross-contamination through ensuring good personal hygiene.

Read the full report here. As part of the project, a data storyboard was created and can be viewed online.

To find out more about this foodborne disease, visit our Campylobacter webpage.