

Latest levels of AMR bacteria in chicken published

The two annual surveys tested fresh chicken on sale in the UK, with one looking at certain types of [antimicrobial-resistant \(AMR\) E. coli](#), and the other at [AMR campylobacter](#). The results are from Year 4 of the surveys (2017 to 2018).

Overall, the AMR E.coli contamination in retail chicken has declined in comparison to previous years, which suggests that the tighter control on antimicrobial usage in industry might be having a positive impact although further work is required to explore this.

The proportion of AMR campylobacter isolates and multi-drug resistance found were similar to those in Year 3 (August 2016 to July 2017).

The FSA's Science lead in Microbiological Risk Assessment, Paul Cook, said:

'Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a national strategic priority for government and the FSA is playing its part by continuing to fill the evidence gap on the role that food plays.

'While there is evidence that AMR bacteria are present on chicken sold in the UK, it is encouraging to see the levels holding steady and even reducing. The risk of getting AMR-related infections through eating or preparing contaminated meat remains very low as long as you follow good hygiene and cooking practices.'

AMR in the food chain

The development and spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a concern worldwide. The use of antibiotics is important in treating infections and preventing disease from arising in both animals and humans. However, the overuse and/or misuse of antimicrobials in both animal husbandry and healthcare settings has been linked to the emergence and spread of microorganisms which are resistant to them, rendering treatment ineffective and posing a risk to public health.

The transmission of AMR microorganisms through the food chain is thought to be one of the routes by which people are exposed to AMR bacteria. However, there is uncertainty around the contribution food makes to the problem of AMR in human infections.

The FSA is continuing to monitor the prevalence and types of AMR bacteria in retail chicken and other foods to inform a baseline and determine the risk to public health.

Consumer advice

Chicken and meat are safe as long as you follow good hygiene and cooking practices.

- cover raw chicken and store at the bottom of the fridge so juices cannot drip onto other foods and contaminate them with food poisoning bacteria such as campylobacter

- don't wash raw chicken - thorough cooking will kill any bacteria present, while washing meat can spread germs by splashing
- thoroughly wash and clean all utensils, chopping boards and surfaces used to prepare raw chicken
- wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, after handling raw chicken - this helps stop the spread of bacteria by avoiding cross-contamination
- make sure chicken is cooked thoroughly and steaming hot all the way through before serving. Cut into the thickest part of the meat and check that it is steaming hot with no pink meat and that the juices run clear.