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| Egg Recall Due to  *Salmonella* Enteritidis |
| Question and Answers - March 2019 |

Victoria's Chief Health Officer is urging Victorians to check their homes for eggs produced by Bridgewater Poultry following the detection of a particular strain of *Salmonella* bacteria (*Salmonella* Enteritidis). The department has identified five cases of illness which could be linked to this strain of *Salmonella*.

# About the product recall

## Which products have been recalled?

The eggs are packaged as **Woolworths 12 Cage Free Eggs** 700g, **Victorian Fresh Barn Laid Eggs** 600g, **Victorian Fresh Barn Laid Eggs** 700g, **Victorian Fresh Barn Laid Eggs** 800g, **Loddon Valley Barn Laid** 600g (Coles in VIC and SA only). Images of these three product lines are below.

The best before dates are: **BB 20 MAR 19**, **23 MAR 19**, **27 MAR 19**, **30 MAR 19**, **3 APR 19**, **6 APR 19**, **10 APR 19**, **14 APR 19**, **17 APR 19**, **20 APR 19**, **24 APR 19**, **27 APR 19**, **29 APR 19**.

Further information about the recall is available on the [FSANZ website](file:///C:\Users\scro3101\Downloads\FSANZ%20website): <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/recalls/Pages/Bridgewater-Poultry-Eggs.aspx>



## Where are these products available?

Bridgewater Poultry is recalling their products which have been available at Woolworths and independent stores in New South Wales, Victoria, ACT and Tasmania and Coles in Victoria and South Australia.

Further information about the recall is available on the [FSANZ website](file:///C:\Users\scro3101\Downloads\FSANZ%20website): <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/recalls/Pages/Bridgewater-Poultry-Eggs.aspx>

## Does the recall apply to other eggs?

While the investigation is ongoing, people should always follow the usual requirements to cook eggs thoroughly. Avoid raw or undercooked egg products, particularly if you have a compromised immune system, are aged under 2 years or over 70 years, or if you are pregnant.

## How should I dispose of the product/s?

Consumers who have purchased these eggs should return them to the place of purchase for a full refund or dispose of them fully in the rubbish bin.

## Can I compost the recalled product/s?

No. *Salmonella* can become established in the environment, leading to risk of infection in people. Salmonella Enteritidis is not normally found in Australia so it is important recalled eggs are disposed of fully in the rubbish bin or returned to the place of purchase.

## Can I feed the recalled product/s to my pet/s?

No. *Salmonella* can be transmitted in affected eggs to pets and livestock. Many animals, even reptiles, can be infected with *Salmonella* without having symptoms of diarrhoea and will have the bacteria in their faeces. There is then a risk these animals can infect people if they do not wash their hands after handling pets and other animals. Recalled eggs should be disposed of fully in the rubbish bin or returned to the place of purchase.

## Will cooking the affected eggs kill the bacteria?

*Salmonella* Enteritidis can be found in the egg whites and yolk, not just eggs shells (which makes it different to other strains of *Salmonella)* Therefore, it is important that all recalled eggs should be disposed of in the rubbish bin or returned to the place of purchase.

All other eggs not affected by the recall are safe to eat, provided people follow the usual requirements to cook eggs thoroughly.

## What should I do if I have already eaten eggs that have now been recalled?

The risk of *Salmonella* Enteritidis is very low if eggs are cooked thoroughly (such as hard boiled).

If you are worried that you may have consumed eggs that have not been cooked thoroughly but feel well, you do not need to seek medical attention. There is no need to have a test for *Salmonella* infection if you feel well.

Most people who become unwell will fall ill between six to 72 hours after ingesting the bacteria. If you develop any symptoms of salmonellosis (see below) – you can be assessed by your doctor. They can then test your stool (poo) to see if the *Salmonella* bacteria can be detected.

# About salmonellosis

## What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a type of gastroenteritis caused by the germ (bacterium) *Salmonella*. Salmonellosis can affect anyone. The severity of symptoms depends on the number of bacteria you ingest, your age and your general health. You may be more prone to salmonellosis if you are elderly, have another medical condition (that weakens your immune system) or are malnourished.

Additional information is available on the Better Health Channel at: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis-salmonellosis>

## What are the symptoms of Salmonellosis?

You can fall ill any time between six to 72 hours after ingesting the bacteria. Symptoms include:

* diarrhoea, which may contain blood or mucous
* fever
* headache
* stomach cramps
* nausea
* vomiting

dehydration, especially among infants and the elderly.

In rare cases, bacteria can enter the bloodstream and blood poisoning (septicaemia) may occur as a complication of salmonellosis.

If you are displaying any of these symptoms it is important to be assessed by your doctor or discuss with the NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

## How contagious is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is not easily spread from person to person, but people with symptoms of diarrhoea still need to practice good personal hygiene to prevent infecting close contacts, including those living in the same household and sharing bathrooms.

## If I’m not showing symptoms can I still pass it on?

Yes, it is possible, but not likely. Good personal hygiene practices, especially after visiting the toilet, should prevent close contacts of anyone infected with *Salmonella* bacteria from being at risk.

## How can a person get salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis occurs when *Salmonella* bacteria are taken in by mouth. This may happen by:

* Eating food contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria such as undercooked meat, especially poultry, and raw or undercooked eggs.
* Eating cooked or ready-to-eat food that has been contaminated with *Salmonella* bacteria from raw food, such as raw chicken. This is called cross-contamination and can also happen when food comes into contact with contaminated kitchen surfaces, such as chopping boards and utensils that have been used to prepare raw food.
* Contact with pets and farm animals infected with *Salmonella* bacteria.
* Many animals, even reptiles, are commonly infected with Salmonella without having any symptoms of diarrhoea and will have the bacteria in their faeces. People can get salmonellosis if they do not wash their hands after handling pets and other animals.
* Close contact with a person who is infected with *Salmonella* bacteria and has diarrhoea.
* If people with salmonellosis do not wash their hands properly after going to the toilet, their contaminated hands can spread the bacteria to surfaces and objects that may be touched by others, or food that will be eaten by others. Hands can also become contaminated when changing the nappy of an infected infant.

## How can salmonellosis be prevented?

* Thoroughly cook all food derived from animal sources, particularly poultry, pork and egg products.
* Ensure cooked foods are not re-contaminated with bacteria from raw foods.
* Do not consume the recalled product.
* Ensure eggs are cooked thoroughly. Avoid raw egg products, particularly if you have a compromised immune system, are aged under 2 or over 70, or if you are pregnant.
* Wash hands thoroughly after handling animals or cleaning up after your pet.
* Other advice can be obtained from the [Better Health Channel](file:///\\N060\Group\PH\DIR%20-%20RPS\Comms\FOOD%20SAFETY%20&%20REGULATORY%20ACTIVITIES\Food%20safety\2016%20recalls\SALAD%20ITEMS%20feb%202016\tools\•%09https:\www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au\health\conditionsandtreatments\gastroenteritis-salmonellosis) website.

## How long does the illness and infection last?

Illness from *Salmonella* infection usually only lasts for a few days, however the bacteria may be present in an infected person’s faeces for several weeks, and very rarely for a longer period.

## How is it diagnosed?

A stool sample is required for testing. The laboratory can test for *Salmonella* DNA but this does not tell us what type of *Salmonella* may have caused the infection. The preferred test is for the laboratory to try to grow the bacteria using a culture which will tell the laboratory if you have *Salmonella* Enteritidis infection. If the results show that a person had salmonellosis, the treating doctor will be able to provide advice and will notify the Department of Health and Human Services.

## How is it treated?

Illness from *Salmonella* infection usually only lasts for a few days and antibiotic treatment is not normally required. However, a doctor may prescribe antibiotics in some situations.

While a person is recovering:

* Give plenty of fluids. Oral rehydration solution is highly recommended for children with mild to moderate dehydration. It is available at pharmacies and should be administered following the instructions on the packaging.
* Mildly unwell children should be given their usual fluids more often. Carbonated (fizzy) drinks or undiluted juice should be avoided.
* Do not give medicines to prevent vomiting or diarrhoea (especially in children), unless specifically advised to do so by a doctor.
* Breastfed babies should continue to be breastfed throughout their illness.
* Children on formula or solid diets should restart their normal diet (including full strength lactose-containing milk) following rehydration with oral rehydration solution.
* Children who are hungry or ask for food should be given small portions of their usual foods, but avoid foods high in sugar or fat.

## I'm worried about my family's health, what should I do?

If you are concerned about your own health or your family’s health, see your doctor or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

# If you are being tested for salmonellosis

## How long will it take to get the results?

Once you have had a stool sample taken and sent to a lab, your doctor will usually get results within a few days.

## Should I do anything differently while I wait for results? For example, should I go to work?

Practice good personal hygiene. If you still have symptoms including diarrhoea, fever, nausea and abdominal discomfort, do not to go to work until 24 hours after your symptoms have resolved. Do not send children with symptoms to school or child care. If possible, avoid preparing food for others, especially if you have diarrhoea.

People employed as food handlers, childcare workers and health care workers should not return to work until 48 hours after their symptoms resolve.

# If you have been diagnosed with salmonellosis

## What should I do if I have been diagnosed with salmonellosis?

Follow your doctor’s advice. Remember, stay away from school and childcare and other group settings until you have been free of symptoms for 24 hours. Good personal hygiene is essential.

People employed as food handlers, childcare workers and health care workers should not return to work until 48 hours after their symptoms resolve.

# About the investigation

## How was the link between the eggs and *Salmonella* discovered?

*Salmonella* is a common form of gastroenteritis which can affect anyone. There are around 3500 cases notified to the department every year, but *Salmonella* Enteritidis is not a common strain of *Salmonella* found in Australia.

In this case, regular environmental testing at Bridgewater Poultry found *Salmonella* at their farm. At the same time, the Health Protection Branch of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services was investigating notified cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis. This involved interviewing cases and obtaining detailed food histories then comparing them to each other to determine any common foods consumed.

At the same time, New South Wales has been experiencing an outbreak of *Salmonella* Enteritidis also linked to eggs. To limit the spread and risk of human disease a recall of eggs from Bridgewater has occurred.

## What else is happening?

The department’s intensive investigations are continuing to try and determine the exact source of this outbreak. The investigation incorporates genetic testing that compares the DNA sequences of the *Salmonella* bacteria isolated from human (poo) samples to the *Salmonella* bacteria at Bridgewater Poultry. This testing is very specific providing a link between affected product and affected people.

The department is working with Bridgewater Poultry, state and territory food regulators and epidemiologists, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, local councils and impacted food businesses as part of this investigation.

# About food safety

## Who is responsible for deciding to recall a food?

In Victoria, the Department of Health and Human Services can mandate a food recall, however most food recalls are voluntarily undertaken by the affected manufacturer or distributor.

# More information

Further information regarding this issue may be published on the Chief Health Officer web pages of the Department of Health and Human Services website if required.

For health concerns, see your doctor or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

See Better Health Channel fact sheets for more information on:

* <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis-salmonellosis>
* <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/handwashing-why-its-important>

Food Safety website (Department of Health and Human Services) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety>

For an updated list of the recalled products: Food Standards Australia New Zealand <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/Pages/default.aspx>

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