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USDA – Food Recall

The FDA has issued an alert linked to cantaloupe from Honduras being contaminated with Salmonella. A press release follows. Here are some tips for consumers:

- If consumers recently purchased fresh cantaloupe, the FDA advises them to check with the grocery or store where the melon was purchased. If the melon is from Agropecuaria Montelibano, a Honduran grower and packer the melon should be thrown away. Consumers may wish to see if the grocery will refund the purchase price.
- Due to recurring illness outbreaks linked to melon, here are some safe handling instructions: Always wash melons before slicing. Use clean water and plenty of scrubbing. Soap can be used as long as it is rinsed off. A dilute chlorine bleach dip can also be used - 1 teaspoon bleach per quart of water. Store cut melon in the refrigerator. Melon is a low-acid fruit and safe handling instructions apply as summarized by the FDA below:
- The FDA recommends that consumers take the following steps to reduce the risk of contracting Salmonella or other foodborne illnesses from cantaloupes:
 - * Purchase cantaloupes that are not bruised or damaged. If buying fresh-cut cantaloupe, be sure it is refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
 - * After purchase, refrigerate cantaloupes promptly.
 - * Wash hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling fresh cantaloupes.
 - * Scrub whole cantaloupes by using a clean produce brush and cool tap water immediately before eating. Don't use soap or detergents.
 - * Use clean cutting surfaces and utensils when cutting cantaloupes. Wash cutting boards, countertops, dishes, and utensils with hot water and soap between the preparation of raw meat, poultry, or seafood and the preparation of cantaloupe.
 - * If there happens to be a bruised or damaged area on a cantaloupe, cut away those parts before eating it.
 - * Leftover cut cantaloupe should be discarded if left at room temperature for more than two hours.
 - * Use a cooler with ice or use ice gel packs when transporting or storing cantaloupes outdoors.

US: FDA warns of Salmonella risk with cantaloupes from Agropecuaria Montelibano

22.mar.08 U.S. Food and Drug Administration Press Release

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01808.html>

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued an import alert regarding entry of cantaloupe from Agropecuaria Montelibano, a Honduran grower and packer, because, based on current information, fruit from this company appears to be associated with a Salmonella Litchfield outbreak in the United States and Canada. The import alert advises FDA field offices that all cantaloupes shipped to the United States by this company are to be detained.

In addition, the FDA has contacted importers about this action and is advising U.S. grocers, food service operators, and produce processors to remove from their stock any cantaloupes from this company. The FDA also advises consumers who have recently bought cantaloupes to check with the place of purchase to determine if the fruit came from this specific grower and packer. If so, consumers should throw away the cantaloupes.

To date, the FDA has received reports of 50 illnesses in 16 states and nine illnesses in Canada linked to the consumption of cantaloupes. No deaths have been reported; however, 14 people have been hospitalized. The states are Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The FDA is taking this preventive measure while the agency continues to investigate this outbreak in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state partners. Such intervention is a key component of FDA's Food Protection Plan.

Symptoms of foodborne Salmonella infection include nausea, vomiting, fever, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps. In persons with poor health or weakened immune systems, Salmonella can invade the bloodstream and cause life-threatening infections. Individuals who have recently eaten cantaloupe and experienced any of these symptoms should contact their health care professional.

The FDA recommends that consumers take the following steps to reduce the risk of contracting Salmonella or other foodborne illnesses from cantaloupes:

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Source: Dr. Barbara Ingham, Food Science Extension Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Madison
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