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In the News

Foodborne illness: New data point to veg sources

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Last month an interagency team representing the federal agencies responsible for food safety released new data and methodology to identify sources of foodborne illness. Their project focused on the top four pathogens, including *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*.

The team's report attributes a majority of cases of foodborne illness to fresh vegetable produce and not animal products.

See the full report: "Foodborne Illness Source Attribution Estimates for *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli* O157 (E. coli O157), *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm), and *Campylobacter* using Outbreak Surveillance Data, 1998-2012."

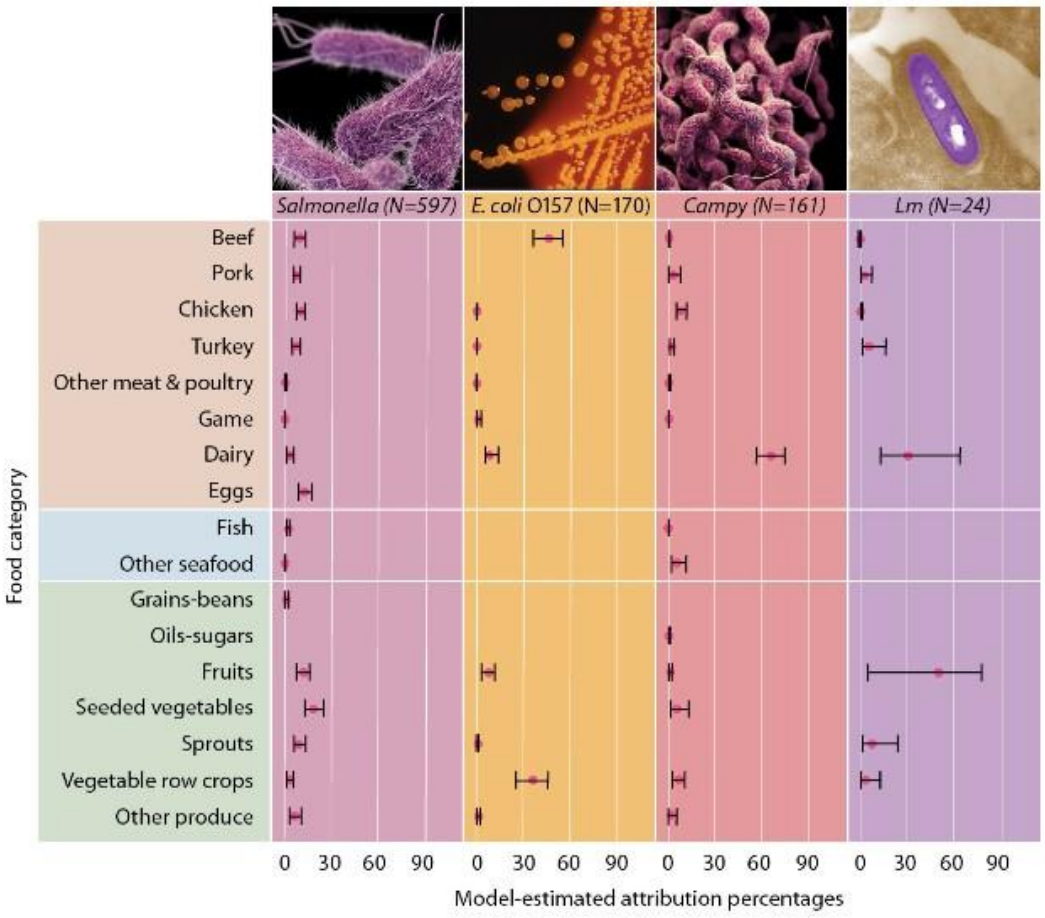
However, the report's information on eggs shows a rate of illness that is higher than the present rate of *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) contamination of eggs. This is due to the 2010 outbreak from a Midwest egg producer who was negligent in readying his farms for the FDA program that started just after the outbreak began. Since 2010, the level of SE contamination of layer houses has remained at an all time low and no major outbreaks have occurred since 2010.

The Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC) is a partnership between the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Formed in 2011, IFSAC's mission is to improve foodborne illness source attribution and provide better estimates on the human health impact of leading pathogens.

Key: Uniform food categories

The IFSAC model categorizes foods in a uniform way that matches up with the FDA and FSIS regulatory systems. It also gives more weight to recent disease outbreaks while limiting bias caused by large outbreaks. See figure from the IFSAC report below.

Figure 1. Model-estimated attribution percentages (and 90% credibility intervals) for *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli* O157 (*E. coli* O157), *Campylobacter (Campy), Listeria monocytogenes (Lm).*



Consumer news media picked up on the notion of new data busting old mythology.

More detailed accounts appeared in food industry media.

Layer health in the U.S. deemed very good"

The annual survey of the membership of the Association of Veterinarians in Egg Production in the fall of 2014, reported at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA), showed that the health of chickens producing eggs for U.S. consumers is quite good. No major health issues were reported.

Of course, there remains a great deal of concern for foreign animal diseases such as highly pathogenic avian influenza. The concern is not only for egg layers themselves but also for other types of poultry that can spread disease to egg layers and wreak havoc on movement of eggs within a state and across state lines.

The good news about overall health status stems from the continued supply of high quality, effective vaccines, the work of professional nutritionists, well-trained flock supervisors, and investments in better housing systems. Also, a large force of poultry veterinarians serves the layer industry. In addition to those employed directly by egg companies, veterinarians are working for vaccine companies, primary breeders, universities, diagnostic laboratories, and health product supply companies.

View the complete 2014 U.S. Table Egg Industry Report.

A slide presentation can be accessed online at the USAHA website.

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