

Press release
Parma, 9 April 2013
Stockholm, 9 April 2013

Rise in human infections from *Campylobacter* and *E. coli*, whilst *Salmonella* cases continue to fall: EFSA and ECDC 2011 zoonoses report

Campylobacteriosis remains the most reported zoonotic disease in humans [1], with a continuous increase in reported cases over the last five years. The trend in reported human cases of verocytotoxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (VTEC/STEC) has also been increasing since 2008 and was further strengthened due to the outbreak in the summer of 2011. *Salmonella* cases in humans have continued to fall, marking a decrease for the seventh consecutive year. These are some of the main findings of the annual report on zoonoses and food-borne outbreaks in the European Union for 2011 produced jointly by the European Food Safety Authority and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

The report supports the European Commission and EU Member States in monitoring risks related to zoonotic diseases. These diseases can be transmitted directly or indirectly between animals and humans, for instance by consuming contaminated foodstuffs or through contact with infected animals.

“The good news is that the positive trend in reduction of *Salmonella* cases in humans and poultry is continuing. However, the increase in *Campylobacter* and VTEC cases highlights the continued need to monitor and control the presence of these bacteria in the food chain in order to reduce the risk of human exposure”, said Pia Makela, Head of EFSA’s Biological Monitoring Unit.

Johan Giesecke, Chief Scientist at ECDC, added: “We need to remain vigilant and continue to strengthen our collaboration with all important partners involved in the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases. Although the results of the report show a sustained decrease in *Salmonella* cases in humans, *Campylobacter* and VTEC cases are still increasing. We can’t lower our guard”.

In 2011, a total of 220,209 *Campylobacter* cases were reported in humans, 2.2% more than in 2010. This bacterium can cause diarrhoea and fever, and the most common foodstuff in which *Campylobacter* was found was chicken meat.

VTEC/STEC bacteria accounted for 9,485 human disease cases in 2011. The strong increase observed in 2011 was primarily due to the large outbreak of the rare strain O104:H4 in Germany and France associated with sprouted seeds; however, an increasing trend had already been reported in previous years. Infection with VTEC strains can lead to bloody diarrhoea and Haemolytic Uremic Syndrome, a serious complication that can be fatal. With respect to the presence of this bacterium in animals and foodstuffs, VTEC was most often reported in bovine meat products and cattle.

Although **salmonellosis** has declined significantly in the last years, in 2011 it was still the second most frequently reported zoonotic disease in humans, accounting for 95,548 reported cases. The continued decrease in human cases reflects the results of the *Salmonella* control programmes put in place by EU Member States and the European Commission which have led to a decline in *Salmonella* infections in poultry populations, particularly laying hens (and hence eggs) and chickens. *Salmonella*, which can cause fever, diarrhoea and abdominal cramps, was most often found in fresh chicken meat, as well as minced chicken meat and chicken meat preparations.

The report also shows a total of 5,648 **food-borne outbreaks** recorded across the EU in 2011. Food-borne outbreaks include two or more human cases in which the same contaminated food has been consumed. These affected 69,553 people and caused 93 deaths. *Salmonella* continued to be the most frequently

reported cause of the outbreaks with known origin (26.6 % of all outbreaks), followed by bacterial toxins (12.9%) and *Campylobacter* (10.6%). Even though *Campylobacter* is the most often reported cause of zoonotic diseases overall, it is less often reported as a cause of food-borne outbreaks. The most common food sources of the outbreaks were eggs and egg products, mixed food, fish and fish products.

The report covers 10 zoonotic diseases in total, including also listeriosis, echinococcosis, yersiniosis, brucellosis, tuberculosis due to *Mycobacterium bovis*, trichinellosis, and rabies. It supports the European Commission and EU Member States in monitoring and reducing risks related to zoonotic diseases.

Other relevant findings:

- The disease alveolar **echinococcosis**, which is caused by the *Echinococcus multilocularis* parasite, has increased in humans over the last five years. In several central European countries, this parasite was commonly reported in foxes which are the main source of human infection. Echinococcosis is a serious disease which develops gradually over several years and, if untreated, may be fatal.

Relevant links

- [The European Union Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic agents and Food-borne Outbreaks in 2011.](#)
- [Analysis of the costs and benefits of setting certain control measures for reduction of *Campylobacter* in broiler meat at different stages of the food chain](#)
- [Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* outbreak\(s\)](#)
- Topic A-Z: [Campylobacter](#)
- [ECDC's Food- and Waterborne Diseases and Zoonoses Programme](#)

Note to editors:

- To quote this report please use: The European Union Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic agents and Food-borne Outbreaks in 2011.

For media enquiries please contact:

[EFSA Media Relations Office](#)

Tel. +39 0521 036 149

E-mail: press@efsa.europa.eu

[ECDC Press Office](#)

Tel. +46 (0) 858 601 678

E-mail: press@ecdc.europa.eu

[1] *The number of human cases is likely higher in reality due to under-reporting. Better identification and reporting practices may have contributed to the observed increase in number of cases in some countries.*