

Historically low number of Danes infected with salmonella

20 June 2014

The number of Danes who contracted a salmonella infection reached a historic low level in 2013. More than half of those infected became ill during a trip abroad. For the third year in a row no salmonella cases were linked to Danish broiler meat. These are some of the findings presented in the annual report on the occurrence of diseases that can be transmitted from animals and food to humans. The report was prepared by the Zoonosis Centre at the National Food Institute, Technical University of Denmark, in cooperation with Statens Serum Institut, one of Denmark's largest research institutions in the health sector, and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration.

In 2013 a total of 1,136 [salmonella infections](#) were reported among Danes. This is the lowest number since action plans to combat salmonella were introduced in the 1990s, and is equivalent to 20.3 infected cases per 100,000 inhabitants. More than half of the sick had contracted salmonella during a trip abroad.

Most of those who returned home with a travel-related infection had been to Turkey (31%), where a major [outbreak](#) of Salmonella Enteritidis occurred in 2013. There were also many cases of salmonella among travellers to Thailand (13%), Egypt (8%) and Spain (6%).

No salmonella illness from Danish broiler meat

According to the 2013 source account no cases of salmonella were attributed to Danish broiler meat.

"Denmark has been a pioneer when it comes to combatting salmonella in broiler meat and eggs. When we look at the figures from the last three years, it is quite evident that the joint efforts of producers, authorities and researchers to make Danish broiler meat salmonella-free have paid off," National Food Institute senior academic officer Birgitte Helwich explains.

Salmonella in Danish meat

Among the salmonella cases not associated with travel, Danish pork was the [food source](#) that was associated with the most infections in 2013 – more specifically, approximately 12% of reported salmonella cases. This is an increase from 2012, when the figure was estimated at 8%.

"The increase is primarily due to the fact that last year we had both a national and a local outbreak where Danish pork was the source of infection," Birgitte Helwich says.

Imported pork was the cause of 2.6% of salmonella cases, and about 25% of all salmonella cases in Denmark could not be attributed to a specific food source or travel abroad.

Other foodborne infections

With 3,766 cases registered in 2013, campylobacter still causes the most cases of foodborne bacterial illnesses in Denmark.

In 2013, a total of 73 foodborne illness outbreaks were registered. An outbreak is an event in which several people become sick from the same food source. In 2012, 82 outbreaks were recorded.

As in previous years, norovirus caused the most outbreaks (38.4%). The largest outbreak was caused by Clostridium perfringens. In this outbreak 425 people became sick after eating patty shells with a sauce containing hen meat and asparagus at an event in North Jutland. In total Clostridium perfringens caused 16 outbreaks. In a Nordic outbreak caused by hepatitis A virus 117 people became ill, including 72 Danes. The source of infection was most probably frozen strawberries.

Provided by Technical University of Denmark (DTU)

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