

FDA Investigates Contaminated Pig Ear Pet Treats Connected to Human Salmonella Infections

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is coordinating with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state agencies to investigate human cases of salmonellosis related to several Salmonella serotypes with a suspected link to exposure to pig ear pet treats from Argentina and Brazil.

July 31, 2019 Update: FDA and CDC are advising that consumers avoid all pig ear pet treats and retailers stop selling all pig ear treats at this time. Lennox Intl Inc., a distributor of pig ear pet treats, has initiated a recall for some of the treats involved in this outbreak. CDC announced that there are now a total of 127 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella*, reported from 33 states. Twenty-six ill people have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

Fast Facts

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, together with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and State partners, is investigating a suspected link between pig ear pet treats and human cases of salmonellosis.
- As of July 31, 2019, CDC reports that there are 127 cases of human infection tied to exposure to pig ear pet treats with *Salmonella enterica* serotypes I 4,[5],12:i:-, Infantis, London, and Newport in 33 states. Twenty-six people have been hospitalized.
- The FDA has traced back some of the pig ear treats associated with cases of illness to sources in Argentina and Brazil. Two firms have recalled. Some of these treats have tested positive for *Salmonella*, and further testing is ongoing to identify the *Salmonella* strain(s).
- As of July 31, 2019, based on information gathered from cases and the traceback data gathered from FDA, the FDA and CDC are recommending that people avoid purchasing or feeding *any* pig ear pet treats at this time. If you have pig ear pet treats, safely discard them and thoroughly clean the areas where the treats have been.
- FDA is working with impacted firms to remove pig ear pet treats from the marketplace and identify places where they may have been distributed.
- *Salmonella* can affect both human and animal health. People with symptoms of *Salmonella* infection should consult their healthcare providers. Consult a veterinarian if your pet has symptoms of *Salmonella* infection.
- This is an ongoing investigation and FDA will provide the public with new information as it becomes available.

What is the problem?

FDA is coordinating with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state agencies to investigate 127 human cases of *Salmonella* serotypes I 4,[5],12:i:-, Infantis, London, and Newport across multiple states. Many of these cases have reported exposure to pig ear pet treats. FDA traceback of some of the treats indicates that they came from sources in Argentina and Brazil.

Testing conducted by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) revealed that samples of pig ear pet treats collected from Pet Supplies Plus were positive for *Salmonella* London, *Salmonella* Typhimurium, *Salmonella* Newport, and *Salmonella* Infantis. On July 3, 2019, Pet Supplies Plus notified the public about a recall of all bulk pig ear products supplied to all its retail locations by several different vendors, including Lennox Intl Inc.

Further traceback by FDA has found that many of the people who became ill had encountered pig ear pet treats that were distributed by Lennox Intl Inc. Lennox reports that it sourced these pig ears from Argentina and Brazil. FDA is working with Lennox and other firms to identify the source of the pig ear treats, how they became contaminated, and where they were distributed.

On July 26, Lennox notified the public about a recall. On July 30, the firm expanded that recall and issued an additional public notification. The FDA and CDC have identified 43 human illnesses in this *Salmonella* outbreak linked to Lennox product that were first isolated in November 2018.

To date, human *Salmonella* infections have been linked to pig ears imported from Argentina and Brazil. However, these pig ears do not account for all the illnesses in this outbreak. Pig ears in bulk bins (not packaged or wrapped) may be comingled from multiple sources which does not allow the products to be distinguished. In addition, effective product irradiation may not have occurred for bulk products and for packaged or individually wrapped products.

In addition to the existing Import Alert 72-03 (“Detention Without Physical Examination and Intensified Coverage of Pig Ears And Other Pet Treats Due To The Presence of *Salmonella*”) on pig ear pet treats, FDA is increasing its scrutiny of pig ears imported into the United States through sampling and examination.

What products are involved?

- On July 3, 2019, Pet Supplies Plus announced a recall of all bulk pig ears from its stores in AL, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, NC, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, VA, WI and WV.
- On July 26, 2019, Lennox Intl Inc. announced a recall for some of its pig ear pet treat products. On July 30, the firm announced an expanded recall.

Why is FDA issuing this alert?

The FDA is issuing this alert because contaminated pig ear pet treats represent a serious threat to human and animal health and are adulterated under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act because they contain *Salmonella*. FDA is also making consumers aware of the issue so they can choose whether to remove pig ear treats from their homes or take steps to potentially prevent *Salmonella* infection. The agency will update this alert with additional information as it becomes available.

What do consumers need to do?

The FDA and CDC recommend that people avoid purchasing or feeding *any* pig ear pet treats at this time. This recommendation may change as more information becomes available.

If you have pig ear treats, throw them away in a secure container where animals, including wildlife, cannot access it. Wash your hands thoroughly and disinfect any surfaces that have come into contact with potentially contaminated products.

In general, if you choose to feed treats like pig ears, practice good hygiene by: monitoring your pet while they have the treat, picking up the treat when they are done with it, keeping treats away from small children, cleaning the areas the treat contacted, washing hands, and not allowing your pet to lick you, your family members, or surfaces in your home.

What do retailers need to do?

FDA and CDC recommend that retailers, including online retailers, stop selling all pig ear pet treats.

Retailers, distributors and other operators who have offered pig ears for sale should wash and sanitize bulk bins, other storage containers, and any surfaces (e.g., counters, displays, floors) that have come into contact with potentially contaminated products. In addition, you should advise employees and customers to wash their hands after handling pet treats and food. Carefully dispose of pig ear pet treats in a secure container where animals, including wildlife, cannot access it. Alternatively, retailers who choose not to immediately dispose of pig ear pet treats should securely and safely store packaged product while they determine next steps. FDA will release additional information about the investigation as it becomes available.

What is *Salmonella* and what are the symptoms of *Salmonella* infection?

Salmonella is a bacterium that can cause illness and death in humans and animals, especially those who are very young, very old, or have weak immune systems. According to the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/>), people infected with *Salmonella* can develop diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps. Most people recover without treatment, but in some people, the diarrhea may be so severe that they need to be hospitalized. In these patients, the *Salmonella* infection may spread from the intestines to the blood stream and then to other body sites unless the person is treated promptly with antibiotics. Consult your health care provider if you have symptoms of *Salmonella* infection.

Pets do not always display symptoms when infected with *Salmonella*, but signs can include vomiting, diarrhea (which may be bloody), fever, loss of appetite and/or decreased activity level. If your pet has these symptoms, consult a veterinarian promptly. You should also be aware that infected pets can shed the bacteria in their feces and saliva without showing signs of being sick.

Why is the FDA concerned about *Salmonella* in pet food and treats?

Pet food and treats contaminated with pathogens such as *Salmonella* are of particular public health importance because they can affect both human and animal health. Pets can get sick from *Salmonella* and may also be carriers of the bacteria and pass it onto their human companions without appearing to be ill. The FDA is aware of cases in which humans and/or animals have gotten sick from exposure to contaminated pet foods and treats (*Salmonella*-human cases (</animal-veterinary/news-events/fda-investigates-outbreak-salmonella-infections-linked-raws-paws-ground-turkey-food-pets>), *Salmonella*-kitten (</safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts/blue-ridge-beef-recalls-kitten-grind-raw-pet-food-lotga1102-because-possible-contamination>), *Salmonella*-kitten, dog (</animal-veterinary/news-events/updated-fda-investigates-pattern-contamination-certain-raw-pet-foods-made-arrow-reliance-inc>)).

Once *Salmonella* gets established in the pet's gastrointestinal tract, the animal can shed the bacteria, and the contamination will continue to spread. Because animals can shed the bacteria, it's particularly important to clean up the animal's feces in yards or parks where people or other animals may become exposed. Pets should also be

discouraged from licking you or other family members particularly in the face and it is also important to clean items in the home that may have come into contact with contaminated pig ears or pet food.

The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) requires that all animal foods (including treats), like human foods, be safe to eat, produced under sanitary conditions, contain no harmful substances, and be truthfully labeled. Pet food and treat manufacturers must effectively manage sourcing of ingredients, processing and packing to control pathogens. Pet owners who choose to feed pig ear treats to their pets should be aware of the risks associated with these products.

What should I do if I think I have salmonellosis?

If you think you have symptoms of *Salmonella* infection, consult your health care provider.

What should I do if I think my pet has salmonellosis?

People who think their pets have become ill after consuming contaminated pet food should first contact their veterinarians. Veterinarians who wish to have pets tested for *Salmonella* may do so through the Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network (Vet-LIRN Network (</animal-veterinary/science-research/veterinary-laboratory-investigation-and-response-network>)) if the pet is from a household with a person infected with *Salmonella*.

How can I report a human or animal illness related to pet food?

FDA encourages consumers to report complaints about pet food products electronically through the Safety Reporting Portal (<http://www.safetyreporting.hhs.gov/>). This information helps FDA further protect human and animal health.

The information in this release reflects the FDA's best efforts to communicate what it has learned from the manufacturer and the state and local public health agencies involved in the investigation. The agency will update this page as more information becomes available.

Additional Information

- FDA Fast Facts: FDA advises consumers not to purchase or feed, and retailers not to sell, any pig ear pet treats (</news-events/fda-newsroom/fda-fast-facts-fda-advises-consumers-not-purchase-or-feed-and-retailers-not-sell-any-pig-ear-pet>)
- CDC *Salmonella* (<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/>)
- CDC Investigation Notice: Outbreak of Multidrug-Resistant *Salmonella* Infections Linked to Contact with Pig Ear Dog Treats (<https://www.cdc.gov/Salmonella/pet-treats-07-19/index.html>)
- MDARD Consumer Advisory: Pig ear pet treats sold in bulk distributed in Michigan potentially contaminated with *Salmonella* (https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1572_3628-501259--,00.html)
- Pet Supplies Plus Issues Consumer Advisory for Bulk Pig Ear Product (</safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts/pet-supplies-plus-issues-consumer-advisory-bulk-pig-ear-product-fda-investigating-contaminated-pig>)
- The Lennox Intl Inc is Voluntary Recalling Natural Pig Ears (</safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts/expanded-lennox-intl-inc-voluntary-recalling-natural-pig-ears-july-26-2019>)