

4 December 2003

Action Taken On Salmonella London Cluster

A stall on Warrington Market closed for three days for deep cleaning of equipment and work surfaces and a public alert was issued after the comparatively rare bacterium Salmonella London was isolated in a range of cooked meat products.

People who purchased cooked meats from Lowe's Chicken Barbecue Stalls, prior to Monday 19 November were advised to destroy the products.

The alert followed an investigation by Environmental Health Officials from Warrington Borough Council and experts in infectious disease control from the Cheshire and Merseyside Health Protection Unit of the Health Protection Agency (HPA).

It was set in train after the HPA Laboratory Service reported an unusual number of sporadic cases of Salmonella London were clustered around Warrington.

Dr. Nick Phin, Consultant in Health Protection said: "As soon as test results confirmed the presence of salmonella in cooked meat products from the stall, we felt that we had to alert the public.

"The stall's owners and staff co-operated fully with our investigation and they should be commended for that. Our advice from Environmental Health colleagues was that their practice in the storage and preparation of meat and poultry was generally good. However, an infection had got into their systems in some way and that had to be addressed."

After a range of measures were taken to prevent infection from recurring, the stall was cleared to reopen for business.

Andrew Gilbert, Assistant Director of Environmental Health at Warrington Borough Council, said: "This has been an unfortunate situation. The stall's owners acted on our advice and we are confident that everything has now been done to remove the risk of further infection. We are of course, monitoring and reviewing the situation and continuing to take samples, but we feel that we are now in a position to reassure the public that Lowe's business can continue to trade safely."

Salmonella London is a comparatively rare form of the salmonella bacterium, which is a common cause of gastro-enteritis. The usual features of salmonella are abdominal pain, diarrhoea and fever. Incubation usually takes about three days and the illness normally lasts from three to seven days. It is helped by a replacement of fluids.