USDA To Declare Salmonella An Adulterant in Some Raw Poultry

Article By:
Food and Drug Law at Keller and Heckman

- On August 1, the USDA’s FSIS announced that it will declare Salmonella an adulterant in breaded and stuffed raw chicken products. Breaded and stuffed raw chicken products will be considered adulterated when they exceed 1 colony forming unit (CFU) of Salmonella per gram. Products that exceed the limit would be subject to regulatory action. FSIS believes the limit of 1 CFU/gram will significantly reduce the risk of illness from consuming such products.

- Breaded and stuffed raw chicken products have been associated with up to 14 food safety outbreaks and approximately 200 illnesses since 1998. The products at issue are those found in the freezer section and that appear to be cooked, but are only heat-treated to set the batter or breading; the products contain raw poultry. FSIS has found that continual efforts to improve product labeling have not reduced consumer illnesses.

- FSIS is expected to publish a notice in the Federal Register in the fall and will be seeking public comments on whether a different standard for adulteration (i.e., zero tolerance or one based on specific serotypes) would be more appropriate, an implementation plan, and a verification testing program.

- This announcement is part of FSIS’ effort to reduce Salmonella illnesses associated with poultry. In October 2021, USDA announced that it was reevaluating its Salmonella control strategy. USDA plans to present a proposed framework for a new comprehensive strategy to reduce Salmonella illnesses attributable to poultry in October and convene a public meeting to discuss in November.