

Latest levels of AMR E. coli in beef and pork published

Levels of AMR E. coli contamination in retail beef and pork are holding steady, with less than 1% of samples having E. coli with the types of AMR being monitored. This is similar to findings from previous beef and pork surveys in 2015 and 2017.

The annual survey tests meat products on sale in the UK for the presence of certain types of antimicrobial resistant (AMR) E. coli. [Year 5 of the survey](#) was carried out between January and December 2019 and saw sampling focus on beef and pork. Previous surveys have also looked at AMR contamination in chicken.

The FSA's Science lead in Microbiological Risk Assessment, Paul Cook, said:

'It is reassuring that results have remained stable and levels continue to be very low. We will continue our work to fill the evidence gap of the role that food plays in antimicrobial resistance.

'The risk of getting AMR-related infections through the consumption and handling of contaminated meat is very low, as long as you follow good hygiene and cooking practices.'

AMR in the food chain

The development and spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a concern worldwide. The use of antibiotics is important in treating infections and preventing disease from arising in both animals and humans. However, the overuse and/or misuse of antimicrobials in both animal husbandry and healthcare settings has been linked to the emergence and spread of microorganisms which are resistant to them, rendering treatment ineffective and posing a risk to public health.

The transmission of AMR microorganisms through the food chain is thought to be one of the routes by which people are exposed to AMR bacteria. However, there is uncertainty around the contribution food makes to the problem of AMR in human infections.

The FSA is continuing to monitor the prevalence and types of AMR bacteria in retail chicken and other foods to inform a baseline and determine the risk to public health.

Consumer advice

Meat is safe as long as you follow good hygiene and cooking practices.

- cover raw meat and store at the bottom of the fridge so juices cannot drip onto other foods and contaminate them with food poisoning bacteria

- thoroughly wash and clean all utensils, chopping boards and surfaces used to prepare raw meat
- wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, after handling raw meat - this helps stop the spread of bacteria by avoiding cross-contamination
- before serving pork and minced meat, make sure it is steaming hot and cooked all the way through