FSA publishes first AMR survey of UK retail lamb and turkey meat as National Action Plan continues

The Food Standards Agency has today published the findings of a UK-wide survey of AMR in E. coli and Campylobacter bacteria from lamb and turkey meat on UK retail sale, as national efforts continue to tackle AMR as a strategic priority.

To date, our recent AMR surveys have focused on UK retail beef, pork and chicken meat, resulting in a lack of comparable data on AMR bacteria found in lamb and turkey meat.

An antimicrobial is any substance that kills or inhibits the growth of microorganisms, such as antibiotic drugs which are used to treat bacterial infections in both humans and animals.

When bacteria adapt to survive the effects of antimicrobials, this is known as 'antimicrobial resistance' (AMR). AMR can lead to infections being more difficult to treat with drugs and may pose a risk to public health.

Researchers were asked to focus on AMR in E. coli and Campylobacter specifically, to plug evidence gaps within our current AMR in meat surveillance.

> Professor Rick Mumford, FSA Head of Science, Evidence and Research, said:
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> "It is reassuring that the AMR results for lamb were very low, mirroring those found in retail beef and pork. Higher levels of AMR were detected in retail turkey, but these are similar to those found in chicken in 2020.
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> "The data gathered sets baseline figures for AMR found in UK retail lamb and turkey and will now allow us to monitor the impact of future interventions on levels within these meats for the first time.
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> "It is important to say that the risk of exposure to AMR bacteria from contaminated raw meat through consumption and handling is very low, as long as you follow good hygiene and cooking practices."

More detailed results from the sampling of 210 lamb and 210 turkey meat products include:

- AmpC/ESBL resistant E. coli detected in 2 (1%) of lamb and 24 (11%) of turkey meat samples whilst carbapenem resistance was not detected.
- A transferable colistin resistance gene detected in E.coli from 3 (1%) turkey samples. Although this is the first time this type of resistance has been found in UK retail turkey meat, an FSA risk assessment was carried out and deemed the risk to be very low.
- The prevalence of Campylobacter in turkey was 11%. The most common resistances detected in Campylobacter were to ciprofloxacin, tetracycline and nalidixic acid.

The full report - **Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in E. coli and Campylobacter from retail turkey meat and E. coli from retail lamb in 2020/21** - is available in the research section of our website.

Tackling AMR is a national strategic priority for the UK Government which has led to the development of a 20-year Vision for AMR and the 5-year National Action Plan (NAP), which runs until 2024.

The NAP includes a specific section on the importance of better food safety to limit the contamination of foods and spread of AMR, with an emphasis on strengthening the evidence base for AMR and food safety through research, surveillance and promoting good practice across the food chain.