

Pierce County slaughterhouse recalls hogs tied to salmonella

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Kapowsin Meats of Pierce County is recalling more than 116,000 pounds of whole hogs used for barbecues that may be contaminated with salmonella. Officials say they don't believe the slaughterhouse is the only source.

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A Pierce County slaughterhouse linked to an ongoing salmonella outbreak tied to pork is recalling more than 116,000 pounds of whole hogs used for barbecues, even as investigators search for other sources.

Kapowsin Meats of Graham issued the recall voluntarily Thursday, officials with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) [reported](#).

At least [134 illnesses](#) linked to the rare outbreak strain of Salmonella I, 4, 5, 12:i- have been reported, and 32 of those cases were traced back to Kapowsin Meats, FSIS officials said.

People have fallen ill in 10 Washington counties, with most cases, 84, in King County, followed by 24 in Snohomish County, 12 in Pierce County and a handful of cases elsewhere. Fifteen people have been hospitalized.

Officials with USDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health and agriculture departments have been investigating the outbreak.

Eight of 11 samples from environmental testing at the meatpacking facility were positive for the bacteria, which have never before been seen in Washington, Dr. Scott Lindquist, state epidemiologist, said Thursday.

But Lindquist was quick to add that Kapowsin may not be the original source of the outbreak that has caused illnesses that began between April 25 and July 29.

Federal and state health and agriculture officials are looking at potential sources along the food chain, including farms in Washington and Montana that supplied pigs to Kapowsin Meats, he said.

“Is there a practice anywhere from farm-to-table that’s contributing to this?” Lindquist said. He said that John Anderson, chief executive of Kapowsin Meats, has been cooperative with investigators.

“I personally believe that Kapowsin is going to help us solve this mystery,” he said.

Kapowsin Meats is among five USDA-licensed firms approved to handle animals for immediate slaughter in Washington, and the only one that accepts swine, according to a [USDA list](#) updated Aug. 3.

The firm sells whole hogs for dozens of parties each week in Washington, Anderson told The Seattle Times. The hogs, which typically weigh 60 pounds to 80 pounds, are often the centerpiece of festive gatherings.

He said he welcomes further investigation into the original source of the bacteria. Hundreds of farmers either supply him with pigs or come to Kapowsin to have pigs slaughtered, because it’s the only USDA-approved site in the state.

“This is the worst thing I’ve ever experienced,” Anderson said. “I don’t like seeing so many people sick and having it linked back to my shop.”

Whatever the source of the outbreak, consumers can reduce the chances of infection by following safe handling, preparation and cooking steps. It's important to keep raw meat separated from other foods, to wash hands, utensils and surfaces with hot, soapy water, and to cook pork thoroughly, to 145 degrees.

"No matter what we find and how we find it, the onus is on the consumer to prevent illness," Lindquist said.

SOURCE: <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/pierce-county-slaughterhouse-recalls-hogs-tied-to-salmonella/>