

LIVINGSTON, Calif., Oct. 9, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Ron Foster, President and CEO, provided the following information from the company:

On behalf of the Foster family, our company, and our more than 12,000 employees, I want to reassure you that we are taking every possible step to ensure the current and future safety of our chicken products. Food safety is, and has always been, at the heart of our business. I am deeply sorry for any illness associated with Foster Farms chicken and for any concern or confusion caused by this week's activity.

We have a 75-year history for excellence because of our commitment to continuous advancement in food safety. We are putting every resource we have toward the continued safety of our fresh chicken.

Consumers should know that as recently as Oct. 8, USDA-FSIS publicly assured the safety of our chicken: "Foster Farms chicken is safe to eat but, as with all raw chicken, consumers must use proper preparation, handling and cooking practices." There is no recall in effect and FSIS continues to inspect our poultry on a daily basis, certifying it as Grade A wholesome.

On Monday, as part of a public health alert reminding consumers about proper handling and cooking procedures, the USDA issued Notifications of Intended Enforcement (NOIE) for our plants in Livingston and Fresno. This is an official request by the USDA to demonstrate improved operations, or in this case for Foster Farms, to identify new measures toward Salmonella control in the company's Hazard Analysis Critical Control Plan (HACCP), and in their immediate implementation for mutual satisfaction.

Foster Farms is dedicated to resolving any concerns by the USDA. We are fully cooperating with FSIS during this process and are responding with new and already implemented practices in the affected plants. Some of these interventions have been in place for nearly two months and are proving to be successful. In addition, we have brought in national food safety experts to assess our processes.

Foster Farms Food Safety Update

Written by Australian Business

Earlier this year, we implemented similar new technology and interventions which were found to be highly effective at reducing Salmonella at our Pacific Northwest facility. The FSIS has been fully satisfied with the results.

Despite the challenges of working with the federal government during the shutdown, we are a responsible business working that much harder in full collaboration with the USDA on a resolution.

We have worked hard to earn your trust for 75 years, and I pledge that you can continue to safely enjoy the very best chicken from my family to yours.

The following information should be helpful to know:

- The recent Consumer Reports coverage regarding Salmonella on raw poultry involved product purchased and tested in July 2013, prior to our new processes and controls being implemented at our California facilities. These same processes have been found to be highly effective in the Pacific Northwest and have met the full satisfaction of the FSIS. It should be noted that we were not informed about any investigation by either agency prior to Aug. 9

. As soon as we were informed, we acted quickly to bring in national food safety experts to assess our processes and have reinforced them with new technologies proven to be effective.

- There is no recall and the plant codes on Foster Farms packages do not have an impact on product safety. The plant codes, P-6137, P-6137A and P-7632, only indicate where the product is produced. These plant numbers are not associated with any product recall or specific products. Further, Foster Farms has already implemented additional controls within these plants to fully ensure safety.

- It should be noted that while no illness is ever acceptable, the time period for this issue was over the course of six months from March to mid-September. During that time, more than 25 million consumers safely consumed Foster Farms chicken.

- Raw poultry is not a ready-to-eat product. All raw poultry is subject to naturally occurring bacteria. Whether the raw product is our brand or another, whether there is an alert or not, all raw chicken must be prepared following safe handling procedures, avoiding cross-contamination, and must be fully cooked to 165 degrees to ensure safety. According to the CDC, "It is not unusual for raw poultry from any producer to have Salmonella bacteria. CDC and USDA-FSIS recommend consumers follow food safety tips to prevent Salmonella infection from raw poultry produced by Foster Farms or any other brand."

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Consumers who have any questions should call us at 800-338-8051 and visit our FAQ online:
<http://www.fosterfarms.com/notice/10072013/>

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