

# SAFETY NEWS

## USDA Meat And Poultry Hotline Celebrates 25 Years Of Service

(NAPSA)—On July 1, 1985, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Meat and Poultry Hotline began 25 years of distinguished food safety service.

Before the Internet, e-mail, chat, and tweets evolved, most Americans had never heard of *E. coli* O157:H7. Now, many are knowledgeable about other bacteria that can cause illness such as *Salmonella enteritidis*, *Campylobacter jejuni* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.

During the past 25 years, millions of people have called the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline. People today are more aware of food safety issues than they were in the 1980s, and the Hotline has certainly played a major role in educating Americans on food safety.

### New Methods Of Communication

In 2002, the toll-free Hotline extended its service to callers whose first language is Spanish by adding Spanish-speaking specialists. Food safety publications in Spanish have been written and posted at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov).

In 2004, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) unveiled "Ask Karen," an automated response system, available 24/7 at the FSIS website. Included are answers to over 1,500 questions about the safe storage, preparation and handling of meat, poultry and egg products, and the prevention of food-borne illness and disease. A Spanish version of "Ask Karen" is in the works.

In July 2009, the "Ask Karen Chat" feature became available. You can type a food safety question and a food safety expert at



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the Hotline will return the answer to you in real time. Fact sheets and podcasts, in both English and Spanish, are also available on the FSIS website. Food safety information is also available on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

### Instant Information To Consumers

In an emergency situation, such as an outbreak of food-borne illness, a power outage, natural disaster or a food product recall, the Hotline provides vital information to consumers in a timely manner. For example, in the event of a meat or poultry recall, callers can obtain detailed information that will help them identify the suspect product. Give it a try! Call the Hotline, use Ask Karen or visit the website.

For food safety information about meat, poultry or egg products, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1 (888) MPHotline, or (888) 674-6854; type a question into "Ask Karen" ([www.AskKaren.gov](http://www.AskKaren.gov)); go to [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov); or go to [www.befoodsafe.gov](http://www.befoodsafe.gov).