



THE TROUBLE WITH

CHICKEN

1 x 53 HD



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Every year, Salmonella causes more hospitalizations and deaths than any other foodborne illness. This common bacteria has become one of the top food safety issues in the U.S.—and it's often found on the meat most popular with Americans: chicken.

In fact, about one in four pieces of raw chicken is contaminated with Salmonella today. Why isn't the U.S. food safety system stopping the threat?

In FRONTLINE's *The Trouble with Chicken*, correspondent David E. Hoffman investigates how and why the standards and laws around Salmonella have failed to keep up with the increasing danger posed by some strains of the bacteria.

The film looks closely at the largest Salmonella poultry outbreak in history, when chicken from Foster Farms—the biggest poultry producer on the United States' West Coast—sickened more than 600 people over 16 months. This wasn't the first time the company had Salmonella problems. As FRONTLINE reports, public health officials have been struggling with outbreaks caused by Salmonella contamination from the company's plants for the past decade.

"This is the story of a system that failed to protect public health," says Hoffman (*Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria, The Trouble with Antibiotics*). "This was a very serious outbreak of a dangerous type of Salmonella bacteria. The hospitalization rate was twice normal. And yet, a recall wasn't put into effect for more than a year."

Delving into the complex world of food safety, the investigation reveals a seeming contradiction: even though hundreds of people were falling ill, Foster Farms was still meeting the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) standards for Salmonella contamination.

What's more, the film exposes one of the key shortcomings of the inspection system: while 80 percent of chicken bought in supermarkets is packaged as parts, inspectors have only been testing whole chickens for Salmonella. The agency has only recently proposed standards—or limits—on contamination in chicken parts.

Through interviews with local and national public health officials, as well as victims and a top-level poultry industry executive, the film reveals the discrepancies that exist when it comes to foodborne bacteria—contrasting how regulators cracked down hard on *E. coli* O157 in raw beef and banned it outright after a deadly outbreak at Jack-in-the-Box two decades ago, but have not taken such decisive action with dangerous kinds of Salmonella. And that has left consumers having to protect themselves.

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CREDITS

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