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Nationwide Salmonella Typhimurium DT8 outbreak linked to duck eggs

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC), in conjunction with the HSE Departments of Public Health, the National *Salmonella* Reference Laboratory (NSRL), the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and the Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF), is currently investigating a cluster of human illness caused by a fully sensitive *Salmonella* Typhimurium DT8 strain. Seven cases of illness (six confirmed cases and one probable case with an epidemiological link to a confirmed case) have been reported between February and April 2010, including three cases that were hospitalised. Molecular typing by NSRL has confirmed that these patient isolates are similar.

The cases are dispersed across three HSE-areas, and onset dates range from 27th January to 9th April 2010 (Figure 1).

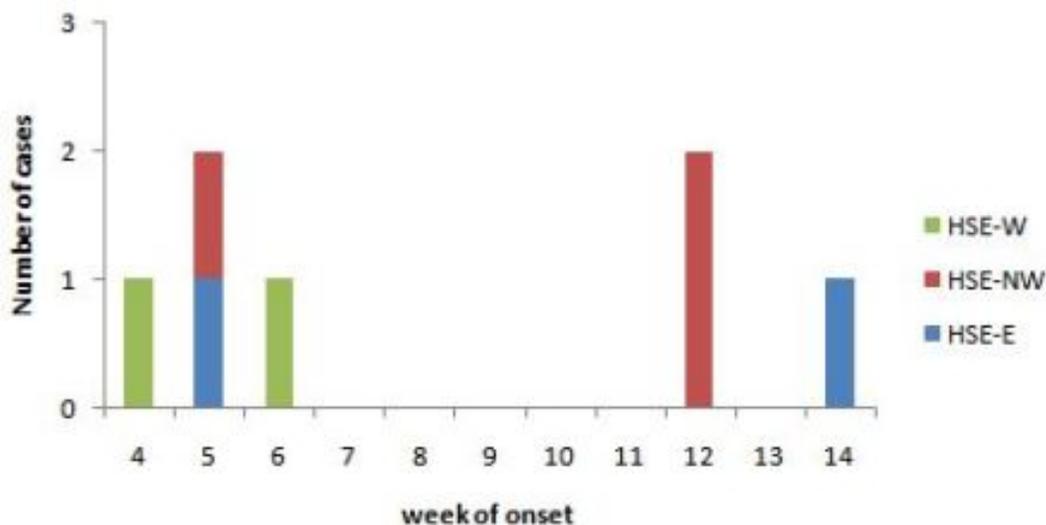


Figure 1. Number of cases of fully sensitive *Salmonella* Typhimurium DT8 by HSE-area and week of onset, Ireland 2010 (Note: week 4 commenced 24th January 2010)

Four were males and three were females, and while the age range was 2-52 years, five of the seven cases were under 15 years old (Figure 2).

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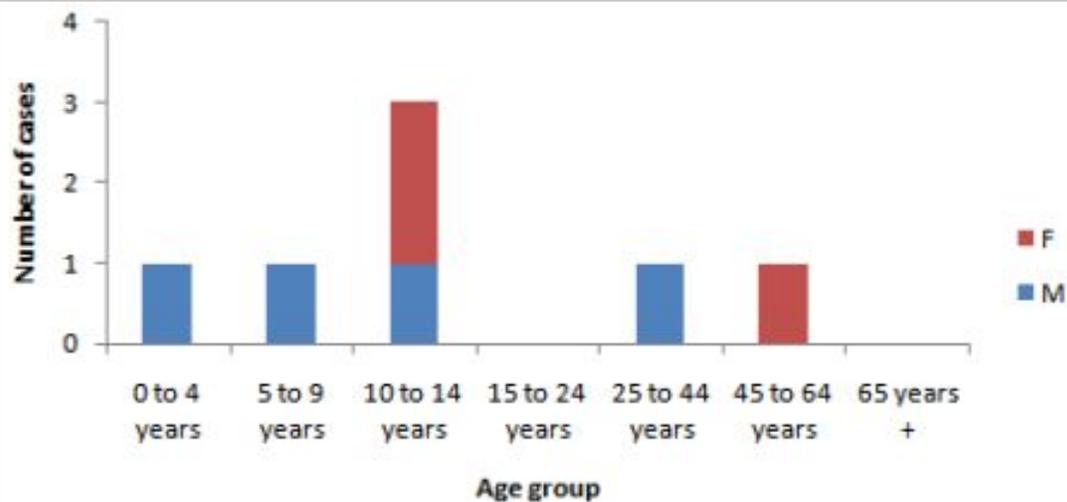


Figure 2. Age-sex distribution of cases of fully sensitive *Salmonella* Typhimurium DT8, Ireland 2010

Descriptive epidemiological investigations suggest a link with duck eggs, with all seven cases reporting consumption or contact with duck eggs. Specifically, three of these cases may have been exposed through eating raw cake batter during baking. A number of environmental samples linked to the duck egg industry have been found positive for the outbreak strain. Investigations are ongoing by the FSAI and DAFF to trace the possible source of the infection.

Press releases have been issued to the public by HPSC and FSAI advising consumers to only consume duck eggs that have been thoroughly cooked and to cease using raw duck eggs in any dishes that will not be cooked prior to eating.^{1,2} It is also recommended that good hygiene practices are followed, such as washing hands and preparation surfaces after handling or using duck eggs to prevent cross contamination. The risk posed by eating raw cake batter is also highlighted.¹

Clinicians are advised to contact their local Department of Public Health if they become aware of cases of foodborne illness that could be linked to duck eggs.

Patricia Garvey, Lelia Thornton, Paul McKeown, HPSC, Martin Cormican, NSRL

1. HPSC. 2010. 'Don't lick spoon' when cooking or baking with duck eggs warns HPSC as children fall ill with salmonella. <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/News/MainBody,4289,en.html>
2. FSAI. 2010. FSAI Investigating Salmonella Outbreak Linked to Duck Eggs. http://www.fsai.ie/news_centre/press_releases/23042010.html

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