

## Food involved in disease outbreaks in Germany in 2008

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Since 2005 the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has been collecting data on foods that were involved in disease outbreaks. These include food-borne outbreaks in community facilities such as hospitals or child care centres. With the General Administrative Regulation (AVV) "Zoonoses Food Chain" in the summer 2008, the legal basis for this data collection system came into force. In accordance with the AVV, the veterinary and food control authorities of all "Länder" and the "Bundeswehr" transfer information regarding the food involved to the BfR after all investigations of a food-borne outbreak have been completed. The BfR is confident that data records can continue to improve in the coming years through an increased readiness to report.

For 2008 the BfR has received information on 71 disease outbreaks from 11 "Länder" and the "Bundeswehr". The reported outbreaks were mainly caused by salmonella. In addition other pathogens, toxins and amines were detected in the tested samples. The agents were transmitted especially by foods of animal origin such as meat preparations and meat products, eggs, fishery products and raw milk. Yet the disease causing agents were also detected in various other foods such as desserts, pasta and baked goods. The agent infested food was consumed in common eating facilities as well as in private households.

Responsible authorities often listed the following as the causes for food contamination: the use of eggs or other contaminated ingredients as well as the occurrence of agents in primary production. Mistakes in handling food, especially in cooling, heating or keeping it warm could also have contributed to the survival and increase of agents in affected food. According to the authorities, food companies' insufficient HACCP concepts were also a factor. The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point concept is an instrument designed to aid food companies in reaching a higher standard of food safety.

In conclusion the communicated information indicates that many of the food-borne outbreaks reported to the BfR in 2008 can be traced back to raw food of animal origin as well as the improper handling of food. Consumer information regarding the proper handling of food can help to prevent future outbreaks in private households. Leaflets in German containing consumer advice on protection from food induced infections can be obtained free of charge from the BfR public relations office ([pressestelle@bfr.bund.de](mailto:pressestelle@bfr.bund.de) or fax on 030-8412-4970). This is also available online in document form.

The full version of the BfR Opinion in German is available on [http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/an\\_krankheitsausbruechen\\_beteiligte\\_lebensmittel\\_in\\_deutschland\\_im\\_jahr\\_2008.pdf](http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/an_krankheitsausbruechen_beteiligte_lebensmittel_in_deutschland_im_jahr_2008.pdf)