



Australian Chicken Meat  
Federation (ACMF) Inc

# ACMF Statement on Food Safety

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## Executive Summary

The chicken meat industry recognises that food safety is vital to consumer health and market confidence in our industry and its products.

The chicken meat industry supports safe food handling throughout the food supply chain, through research, through its own production and processing quality assurance systems and through activities to educate consumers in the safe handling of food.

## Definitions and Scope

Food safety – ensuring that the food we eat is safe and healthy to eat – is a responsibility that stretches across all areas of food production and preparation, from the farm to the kitchen.

This policy focuses primarily on bacterial contamination of meat, which can cause food poisoning.

Other areas that may have potential to affect food safety, such as residues from medications given to chickens are addressed in other policies. See 'Sources and further information'.

## Situation Analysis and Background

Australia has a reputation for having a safe, reliable food supply with high standards for food handling throughout the food industry.

All food, with the exception of sterilised foods such as canned produce, contains bacteria. Most of these bacteria are harmless or even an essential part of the production process such as in cheese. However some bacteria can become a problem if food is not stored and handled correctly. The Australian Department of Health estimates that food-borne bacteria lead to food poisoning in over five million Australians every year. For this reason it is imperative that all food is handled with care.

The bacteria most commonly found on chicken meat is *Campylobacter*, a bacteria present in the gut of all animals and a potential risk in all types of meat. Any risk from bacteria is completely eliminated if meat is cooked properly and care is taken not to contaminate other cooked foods or those to be eaten raw, such as salad.

The chicken meat industry recognises that proper handling at all steps in the food industry – at the farm, by processors, transporters and retailers and in commercial kitchens – can significantly reduce the amount of bacteria on chicken meat and any risk to consumers.

State legislation governs food handling at all stages of commercial food production and sale.

### **At the farm**

Sound husbandry practices in collecting, transporting and handling birds prior to handling reduces risks to food. Australia's poultry industry aims for best-practice, constantly researching to develop new techniques that will enhance both bird health and welfare and food safety for consumers.

### **During processing**

At processing, good food handling practices are supported by systems which ensure consistency and high standards. These include

- Quality assurance programs, notably HACCP, an internationally-recognised program to identify and manage risk in food handling and support safe food handling practices.
- Vendor quality assurance programs audit for strict compliance with the stringent quality assurance programs of a number of major customers.

All quality assurance programs are supported by third party audits to ensure that standards remain consistently high and any problems are identified and addressed quickly. It is not unusual for a processor to be audited 15 times in a year by various bodies. These programs provide a high degree of assurance that food is produced, processed, packaged, stored and transported in accordance with strict food safety requirements.

### **In the Home**

It is generally acknowledged that a significant proportion of food poisonings are caused by improper practices in home kitchens. The Food Safety Information Council says that most food poisonings in the home are a result of mishandling food, such as keeping it at the wrong temperature, cross contamination, and incorrect reheating.

Bacterial threats to food safety can be eliminated by proper cooking and handling; so that while raw meat may have bacteria on it, when meat is properly cooked these bacteria will be killed and therefore harmless to the consumer.

As well as support of broader initiatives to educate consumers in the safe handling of food, the industry provides information directly to consumers through its website and Chook Infoline. The industry also works with government supporting food safety initiatives, testing, and standards, and actively supports the Food Safety Information Council.

## Policy Statements

**The chicken meat industry participates in research and tracks best practice in animal husbandry and food handling with the aim of continually improving food safety for consumers.** Through its participation in the government's Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), the chicken meat industry is active in developing research strategies and priorities and funding research and development to reduce bacterial contamination of chicken meat and other food safety issues.

**The industry supports government initiatives to protect and improve food safety through its active involvement.** This has included involvement in development of codes of practice for safe handling of chicken meat, research to measure and prevent bacterial contamination, and initiatives to promote consumer awareness of safe food handling practices.

**Industry supports food safety standards and supports audits as an important compliance tool. Members must meet all relevant regulations and implement relevant codes of practice and industry guidelines, such as the National Biosecurity Manual.** All processing plants are designed to meet relevant Australian government and international HACCP standards for the safe processing and handling of food. Members must participate in scheduled and unscheduled audits to confirm their compliance to standards.

**Industry provides food safety information direct to consumers, and supports other initiatives which promote proper cooking and safe food handling in the home.**

## Sources and further information

Chemical and medicine treatment in chickens:

[http://www.chicken.org.au/files/ACMF\\_Statement\\_on\\_Hormones.pdf](http://www.chicken.org.au/files/ACMF_Statement_on_Hormones.pdf) and  
[http://www.chicken.org.au/files/ACMF\\_Antibiotics\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.chicken.org.au/files/ACMF_Antibiotics_Policy.pdf)

Food safety and avian influenza:

[http://www.chicken.org.au/files/ACMF\\_AI\\_Customer\\_Info.pdf](http://www.chicken.org.au/files/ACMF_AI_Customer_Info.pdf)

Consumer information on how to handle and prepare chicken correctly:

<http://www.chicken.org.au/page.php?id=9>

The Food Safety Information Council, a non-profit group made up of representatives of State and Federal governments, food industry and professional associations, providing information to consumers:

<http://www.foodsafety.asn.au>