

## **WORLD EGG DAY (10 OCTOBER): AN EGG A DAY IS OK FOR THE HEART, BUT SALMONELLA IS LURKING**

**ANTWERP, 9 OCTOBER 2003 – THE WORLD IS CELEBRATING WORLD EGG DAY ON 10 OCTOBER. AS STUDIES CONSISTENTLY PROVE THAT ONE EGG A DAY DOES NOT INCREASE THE RISK OF HEART DISEASES WITH HEALTHY PEOPLE, THE LAST YEAR HAS SHOWN SOME SERIOUS EGG-RELATED OUTBREAKS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. BUT THERE IS GOOD NEWS: A EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY IS CAPABLE OF ELIMINATING SALMONELLA FOOD INFECTIONS LINKED WITH RAW OR UNDERCOOKED EGGS.**

Many studies have already dispelled the outdated belief that eggs were bad for one's health. It is now common knowledge that dietary cholesterol has only a small effect on blood cholesterol and that the consumption of eggs — up to an intake of one egg per day — has no detectable effect on heart disease risk in healthy people. Experts no longer consider it necessary for healthy people to limit their intake of egg yolks to a specified number per week. Furthermore, eggs are an excellent source of high-quality protein, and they provide significant amounts of several vitamins and minerals. Recent research indicates that egg eaters are more likely than non-egg eaters to have diets that provide adequate amounts of essential nutrients (1).

News from the food safety front is, unfortunately, less impressive. Layer hens are still carrying Salmonella and still transmit these bacteria to eggs before their shell has been formed. Salmonella bacteria thrive at temperatures between 15 and 40 °C. A few dozen of Salmonella bacteria may be sufficient to cause a serious food infection with people with a reduced immune system, such as the elderly, children, patients, etc. These infections can be fatal.

Over the past year, we have noticed some worrying outbreaks. At the end of last year, the United Kingdom was hit by a sudden increase of egg-related outbreaks. Subsequent investigations pointed to eggs imported from Spain. An import study found that 5 % of the imported eggs were infected with Salmonella enteritidis (2). Furthermore, the Food Standards Agency reported that in one hospital outbreak, so-called Lion eggs, which are supposedly salmonella-free, were implicated (3). In Greece, the German junior rowing squad was forced to withdraw from a pre-Athens 2004 event in August 2003 (4). The investigation revealed that the infection was caused by a Salmonella type usually associated with eggs. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned in January 2003 that that shell egg related food outbreaks did not continue their decline in the year 2001 and increased by 50 % in South Eastern states from 2000 to 2001 (5). And finally, in Belgium, there has been a 50 % increase in the number of reported egg-related food infections (6).

On 29 September 2003, the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection confirmed that Salmonella alone annually infects about 160.000 individuals in the EU, of which an estimated 200 persons die. Mr Byrne believes that Salmonella costs the EU about € 2,8 billion annually (7). The US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service believes that there are approximately 1.412.498 cases each year (including those not officially reported), leading to a cost of USD 3 billion (8). Efforts to reduce egg-related outbreaks through a farm-to-fork approach are underway, but will take several years to produce the desired result.

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There is, however, a technique that is capable of eliminating these outbreaks. The Belgian company Leda Technologies has developed a professional kitchen appliance that is capable of eliminating all Salmonella bacteria that may be inside the egg and all bacteria that may be on the shell without affecting their nutritional value or their composition. The appliance is also capable of eliminating all bacteria from and cooking shell eggs in one process. It has already been introduced to leading hotel chains, restaurants, hospitals, elderly homes and hotel schools throughout Europe and it is about to make its first appearance in the United States and Asia, including Japan.

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