

Nationwide Poll: 47 Percent Of Americans Mistakenly Believe Eating Chicken Can Spread Bird Flu

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Washington, DC -- Nearly half of Americans questioned in a new opinion poll mistakenly believe that they can contract bird flu by eating chicken.

Forty-seven percent of respondents -- including 42 percent of college graduates -- agreed with the false statement that eating an infected chicken can result in bird-flu transmission. The poll, which sampled the opinions of 1,007 Americans, was commissioned by the nonprofit Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) and conducted by Opinion Research Corporation.

Cooked poultry simply cannot transmit the virus to a human being. But a massive U.S. media focus on avian influenza, coupled with needless hysteria from animal rights activists who see bird flu as an opportunity to promote vegetarianism, has generated widespread fear that has no basis in reality.

"Even if an infected bird reached the U.S. food supply, properly cooking it would kill the avian influenza virus," said David Martosko, CCF's Director of Research. "Our government should be reminding Americans of this on a regular basis. The most common route of infection from bird flu is direct contact with a sick bird. But few Americans have ever handled a live chicken. And despite what animal rights groups want us to believe, it's quite safe to eat chicken and turkey -- as long as you cook it first."

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is already promoting anti-meat fears with publicity stunts designed to take advantage of the public's misperceptions. According to an e-mail from PETA, the group is planning a November 9 demonstration in front of the USDA's Washington headquarters, featuring "naked" activists lying in "bird flu coffins."

"Avian flu is a serious enough issue without needlessly scaring people about their food," Martosko added. "Even if Americans have learned to filter out propaganda from animal rights groups, Washington officials should be held to a much higher standard. Our government should be aggressively communicating the truth -- that eating fried chicken or Thanksgiving turkey won't increase anyone's risk of catching bird flu. But so far, U.S. consumers are only hearing the increased drumbeat of fear."

Survey Methodology

The survey of 1,007 adults nationwide was conducted by telephone on October 14, 2005 by Opinion Research Corporation. The margin of error is plus or minus three percent.

Question:

Avian flu has been in the news recently. How do you believe a person gets infected with Avian flu? You can answer yes to multiple options.

Coming in contact with someone who already has Avian Flu 58%

Coming in contact with a live chicken that has Avian Flu 54%

Eating an infected chicken 47%

The Center for Consumer Freedom is a nonprofit coalition supported by restaurants, food companies, and consumers, working together to promote personal responsibility and protect consumer choices.

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