



‘Do Not Eat Half-boiled Eggs, Undercooked Chicken’, Warn FSSAI’s Guidelines on Poultry Safety

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The officials from Animal Resource Development Department (ARDD) wearing protective gear cull hens in government-run Gandhigram State Poultry Farm after bird flu virus was detected, in the area near Agartala, on Jan 16, 2016.

(IANS)

“Properly prepared and cooked poultry meat and eggs are safe to eat!”

Amid the growing concerns over bird flu, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued this statement as part of its guidelines for safe handling and consumption of poultry products.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, any news of a new or old pathogen is met with heightened anxiety. Bird flu or avian influenza has been detected in more than a dozen states this month, and the questions over the safety of chicken and other poultry products have been making rounds across India. Despite clarifications from experts that properly cooked chicken is safe, the demand for poultry products reportedly dropped by over 50 per cent across the country in the first half of January 2021.

Now, in the guidance document titled ‘Safe handling, processing & consumption of poultry meat and eggs during bird flu outbreak’, the FSSAI has confirmed that proper cooking

inactivates the bird flu virus present inside meat and eggs. However, the guidelines warn that poultry meat and eggs from the areas affected by the outbreak of bird flu should not be consumed raw or partially cooked.

"To date, no evidence indicates that anyone has become infected following the consumption of properly cooked poultry or poultry products, even if these foods were contaminated with the avian influenza virus," FSSAI explained in the guidance document. The World Health Organization (WHO) also states that it is safe to consume well-cooked poultry meat and eggs and there is no epidemiological data to suggest that the disease can be transmitted to humans through cooked food.

The virus is proven to be destroyed at an internal temperature of 73.9°C within seconds and therefore in a properly cooked meat or eggs the virus never survives. The FSSAI has urged the consumers not to panic and ensure proper handling and cooking of poultry meat and eggs for their safe consumption as outlined in the [guidance document](#). Although sick birds will normally stop producing eggs, eggs laid in the early phase of the disease could contain the virus. Proper cooking inactivates the virus present inside the meat and eggs.

Here's a list of do's and don'ts as listed by the FSSAI:

- **Do not eat half-boiled eggs**
- **Do not eat undercooked chicken**
- **Avoid direct contact with birds in the infected areas**
- **Avoid touching dead birds with bare hands**
- **Do not keep raw meat in open**
- **No direct contact with raw meat**
- **Use a mask and gloves at the time of handling raw chicken**
- **Wash hands frequently**
- **Maintain the cleanliness of the surroundings**
- **Eat chicken, eggs and their products after cooking**

Although there are several types of bird flu, the H5N1 strain of influenza is its most common form. Back in 1997, the H5N1 became the first avian influenza virus to infect humans in Hong Kong, and that outbreak was linked to handling infected poultry. At present, there is no significant evidence of the bird flu spreading via human-to-human contact. So far, almost all cases of bird flu infection in humans have been traced back to close contact with infected birds or contaminated environments.