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**Could it be the chicken....? Investigation into an Outbreak of *Salmonella*  
Typhimurium phage type 126**

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**Introduction** Between May-December 2001, the South Australian Communicable Disease Control Branch investigated a community outbreak of 93 cases of *Salmonella* Typhimurium phage type 126 (STM126). Descriptive epidemiology suggested an association between cases and the consumption of chicken.

**Method** The investigation included a case control study (55 cases, 123 controls), microbiological testing of left over raw chicken from the same batch as that consumed by cases, a survey of retail raw chicken, and an environmental investigation.

**Results** There was a significant association between consumption of chicken and infection with STM126 (OR=4.88). Significant associations with four other food items were not plausible due to low exposure rates among cases and product distribution patterns. STM126 was isolated from a sample of left over chicken consumed by cases and sourced from a local chicken meat processor. Forty percent of retail raw chicken samples from the processor were positive for STM126. Data from the processor indicated that final raw chicken product was contaminated with STM126 between May and September 2001. The processor instituted a series of voluntary control measures at the breeder farm, hatcheries and processing plant. This was followed by a decline in numbers of cases.

**Conclusion** This community outbreak was associated with the contamination of raw chicken meat by STM126 and was controlled by measures instituted within a chicken meat processing company. Structural measures within the raw chicken meat industry can be used in outbreak control and such measures should be considered in addition to behavioural interventions designed to limit cross contamination within the home.