

For immediate release: Friday, 12 June 2015

Barbecue and food poisoning: how bad habits in the sun put thousands of Scots indoors - The Four C's from Food Standards Scotland aim to reduce Scotland's 43,000 annual cases of food borne illness

Thousands of Scots unwittingly put their families at risk of falling ill from a dangerous food poisoning bug by overlooking basic food safety practices when barbecuing. Foodborne illness causes around 43,000 infections, 5,800 GP visits and 500 hospital admissions across Scotland every year.

New research carried out by Food Standards Scotland (FSS) revealed that more than one in four adults (26%) believe washing chicken before it is cooked on a barbecue is the best way to ensure it is safe to eat, but this is a practice that can spread *Campylobacter* which can be a particularly nasty bug, thought to be responsible for more than half the cases of food borne illness in Scotland.

And 16% of people who cook meat on a barbecue use the same utensils for raw and cooked meat without washing them in between. Nearly one in five of Scots who cook meat on the barbecue (17%) admit to not washing their hands after touching uncooked meat and only just over two in five wash their barbecue every time they use it (41%).

A recent survey showed that around three quarters of fresh chickens sold by major retailers are contaminated with *Campylobacter*, yet a third of Scots (32%) could not correctly identify the name of the bug that can cause abdominal pain, severe diarrhoea, vomiting and at its worst, in very rare cases, can kill.

Food Standards Scotland will be at the Royal Highland Show (18-21 June) to spread the word and urge people to stop washing raw chicken to reduce the risk of contracting *Campylobacter* poisoning. To help people eat safe this summer, FSS will be sharing its advice on the "Four C's", backed by celebrity chefs such as Jean-Christophe Novelli to drive home the key steps to safe barbecuing: Cleaning, Cooking, Chilling and avoiding Cross-contamination.

Food Standards Scotland Chief Executive, Geoff Ogle, is calling on consumers to follow the simple safety tips.

He said: "It is easy to dismiss food poisoning as a common, predominantly mild affliction but *Campylobacter* can be a harrowing illness which can cause excruciating pain, inflammation, sickness and diarrhoea.

"It can be particularly common during our summer barbecue season so we are reminding people when cooking on the barbecue to take good care of their families and friends by paying attention to our simple Four C's food safety rules."

Celebrity chefs are also urging families to follow the Four C's safety tips.

Jean-Christophe Novelli said: “I fully support Food Standards Scotland reminding people to pay attention to food safety. Everyone loves barbecues as they’re a fun way of eating healthily with friends and family but if meat is not cooked thoroughly and food hygiene practices aren’t followed, it can lead to horrible and unwelcome illness.

“Visitors to Food Standards Scotland’s stand at the Royal Highland Show will learn about the Four C’s which cover some very simple steps and are a good way to remember what to do to make sure the food you’re cooking, indoors or out, is safe. It makes sense to take the time to follow the basics and don’t let unwelcome bugs spoil your food, or your day.”

Norman Calder, former Great British Bake Off contestant, said: “From a young age I was encouraged to learn about what type of food I should be eating and how to cook and develop my own recipes. It’s important budding young chefs, and indeed anyone who prepares and cooks food in the home or al fresco, understands the basics of food safety and healthy eating, which is why a visit to Food Standards Scotland’s stand at the Royal Highland Show’s a good thing.

“You can learn how to take simple steps like following the Four C’s safety tips to help reduce the risk of Campylobacter, and other types of food poisoning, to remind people not to wash raw poultry, to always wash utensils and chopping boards after use and most importantly wash your hands thoroughly throughout.”

Food Standards Scotland launched in April 2015 after taking over the responsibilities previously carried out by the Food Standards Agency in Scotland to provide information and advice on food safety and authenticity, nutrition and food labelling.

Ends

For further information please contact Julie Watt on julie.watt@consolidatedpr.com / 0131 240 6431 or Emma Bain on emma.bain@consolidatedpr.com / 0131 240 6420 from Consolidated PR.

PICTURE CAPTION: Food Standards Scotland’s Chief Executive Geoff Ogle joined primary three pupils Ioanna, Francis, Arddi and Mali from Edinburgh’s Leith Primary School to help raise awareness of its Four Cs.

Notes to Editors:

In Scotland, there are approximately 43,000 infections, 5,800 GP visits and 500 hospital admissions caused by food borne diseases annually. Source: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/food-safety-standards/foodborne-illness>

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,042 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 3rd - 4th June 2015. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Scottish adults (aged 18+).

Four Cs:

- **Cleaning** - Keep yourself and your kitchen clean by washing and drying your hands thoroughly before preparing food, after touching raw food, especially meat and after going to the toilet. Make sure you keep worktops, chopping boards and utensils clean.
- **Cooking** - Germs such as Campylobacter, Salmonella and *E. Coli* O157 are waiting to strike at any time. However, they can be killed by thorough cooking. Always follow the instructions on the label and check your food is steaming hot in the middle.
- **Chilling** - Stop germs growing by keeping them cold. Make sure you put the right foods in the fridge – look out for a 'use by' date or 'keep refrigerated' on the label. Your fridge is a weapon in the battle against germs, but it must be used effectively.
- **Cross contamination** - This is one of the major causes of food poisoning. There are a few simple things you can do to help stop it happening: keep raw meat and unwashed vegetables separate from ready-to-eat food during storage and preparation, don't let raw meat drip onto other food – keep it in sealed containers at the bottom of your fridge. Never use the same chopping board for raw meat and ready-to-eat food without washing the board (and knife) thoroughly in between and don't wash meat before cooking it.

Royal Highland Show

- The event will take place at Ingliston, near Edinburgh from Thursday, 18 – Sunday, 21 June 2015.
- The stands will feature: Top Tips for Healthy Eating, The Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS) & Eat Safe, Kitchen Hygiene Top Tips - Four C's, children's games, Eat Safe This Summer to avoid food poisoning and a hand-washing unit with UV light to detect bacteria on hands.

Food Standards Scotland

- Food Standards Scotland (FSS) was established by the Food (Scotland) Act 2015 as a non-ministerial office, part of the Scottish Administration, alongside, but separate from, the Scottish Government.
- FSS is mainly funded by government, with a budget of £15.7m agreed within the Food (Scotland) Act 2015, but also charges fees to recover costs for regulatory functions.
- The organisation is based in new premises in Aberdeen, and has approximately 160 office and field-based staff.
- The primary concern of FSS is consumer protection – making sure that food is safe to eat, ensuring consumers know what they are eating and improving

nutrition. FSS's stated vision is to deliver a food and drink environment in Scotland that benefits, protects and is trusted by consumers.

- The objectives of FSS as set out in the Food (Scotland) 2015 Act are to:
 - Protect public from risks to health which may arise in connection with the consumption of food
 - Improve the extent to which members of the public have diets which are conducive to good health
 - Protect the other interests of consumers in relation to food