Cross Contamination Fatality File

Man’s death tied to salmonella in Rhode Island

An elderly man who tested positive for salmonella has died, according to Rhode Island officials investigating an outbreak of salmonella that has sickened 39 people.

Six fresh cases were reported on Tuesday and, while the source of contamination has not been determined, pastries from a local bakery were being recalled.

The man who died was in his 80s and lived in a Warwick nursing home that recently bought pastries from DeFusco’s Bakery in Johnston, she said.

Inspectors went to DeFusco’s and found cross-contamination and major violations of food handling, she said.

The most likely cause of salmonella was consumption of pastries that came in contact with infected raw eggs, the Health Department said. Pastry shells at DeFusco’s had been stored in used egg crates, it said.

Fifteen people were sickened at the nursing home, while the rest of the 39 cases were elsewhere in the community. Twelve people were in hospitals, Beardsworth said.

“What we have now is a group of people who are ill with salmonella,” she said. “What we don’t have is laboratory-confirmed evidence of a source of contamination.

“We have some circumstantial evidence that is pointing us in a certain direction, but we don’t have anything confirmed yet,” she said.

First reports of the outbreak emerged last Friday, and the earliest onset of symptoms was March 14, she said. The man died on Wednesday, March 23.

DeFusco’s, which has voluntarily closed, makes goods such as zeppoles, calzones and eclairs for other bakeries, markets and caterers, she said.

Beardsworth said reports of more illnesses were likely through the end of this week.

Symptoms of salmonella include a sudden onset of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, typically 24 to 72 hours after eating contaminated food, she said.