



ALAMY / PA IMAGES

HANDLING FOOD SAFELY

Chicken is the most widely consumed source of meat protein in the United States. An estimated 9 billion chickens are slaughtered annually in the United States, and the National Chicken Council estimates that 160 billion servings of chicken are safely eaten daily nationwide. Some steps to prevent food poisoning:

Wash hands

and surfaces often

- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water before, during and after preparing food and before eating.
- Wash your utensils, cutting boards and countertops with hot, soapy water.

Don't cross-contaminate

- Use separate cutting boards and plates for raw poultry.
- When grocery shopping,

keep poultry and its juices from other foods.

- Keep raw poultry separate from other foods in the refrigerator.

Cook to the right temperature

■ Food is safely cooked when the internal temperature gets high enough to kill germs that can make you sick. The only way to tell if food is safely cooked is to use a food thermometer.

- 165°F is the best temperature for poultry, including ground chicken and turkey.

Refrigerate promptly

- Keep your refrigerator below 40°F. Know when to throw food out.
- Refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

monella in the food supply.

An estimated 1.2 million illnesses, 23,000 hospitalizations and 450 deaths annually are attributed to Salmonella strains of all kinds, according to the CDC. Salmonella is grouped in a class known as gram-negative bacteria characterized by a double-deck cell membrane, which affords them the biological equivalence of a bulletproof vest.

Not only is it tough for antibiotics to penetrate gram-negative strains, their potential to develop drug resistance is exceptionally high.

Doctors and consumer advocates insist drug-resistant superbugs are not naturally occurring bacteria and should not be in the food supply.

Superbugs emerge because of overexposure to antibiotics. The drugs are present in the chicken industry despite several big producers having declared their poultry antibiotic-free as long ago as 2015. The drugs are administered for veterinary illnesses, but antibiotics inexplicably also help fatten the birds. Larger chickens garner higher market prices, consumer advocates said.

"Salmonella infantis has a track record for being multi-drug resistant," said Dr. Susan Donelan, a specialist in infectious diseases at Stony Brook University Hospital and medical director of healthcare epidemiology.

The strain can cause fever, vomiting and diarrhea as the bacteria proliferate in the gastrointestinal tract. Such illnesses decline in about a week, but may lead to protracted illness among those with weak immune systems. Donelan urges consumers to protect themselves.

"Don't wash raw chicken because splashing water allows droplets to deposit on surfaces, and never use a wooden cutting board," Donelan said.

Dr. Nancy Bono, an associate professor and chair of Family Medicine at NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine in Old Westbury, said it is important for consumers to protect themselves in supermarkets.

"Wear gloves and bring your own plastic bags," she said of disposable gloves, and a plastic bag to place chicken in to keep it separate from other items in a shopping cart.

Bono said cross-contamination is common in supermarkets where shoppers touch packaged poultry products — that are often wet — and then put their hands on shopping cart handles and other items in grocery stores.

and healthy foods.

"There are countries in Europe where it is illegal to sell chicken if there is known Salmonella contamination," said Sorscher, who added that the U.S. lags behind other Western countries when it comes to Sal-

Push to extend ban linking tests to evaluations

Regent says time needed 'to get it right'

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND

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ALBANY — Leaders of the state Board of Regents announced Monday they will push for a one-year extension of a statewide moratorium that temporarily bans use of student test scores in rating the job performance of classroom teachers. Under such an extension, the moratorium would continue through June 2020.

The announcement, on the day before elections for state and federal offices, signaled that education leaders are seeking extra time — within limits — to settle an issue that has shaken local school districts for more than six years.

Resistance to the system linking tests to teacher evaluations has sparked a series of annual boycotts of state exams given to students in grades three through eight. The opt-out movement, with its epicenter on Long Island, spread statewide.

The Regents are scheduled to vote on the time extension at their Dec. 10 meeting. A majority of the 17-member board, including its Long Island representative, Roger Tilles of Great Neck, has indicated support.

"At the end of this year, we as a board needed to act and to give ourselves time to really look at this," said Betty Rosa of the Bronx, chancellor of the Regents board, which sets much of the state's school policy.

The panel's vice chancellor, Andrew Brown of Rochester, added that the one-year extension would allow Regents time "to get it right."

New York State United Teachers, the state's biggest union representing educators, endorsed extension of the moratorium while adding that it will continue to lobby for a major overhaul of the current law requiring up to 50 percent of evaluations to be based on student scores. NYSUT wants to return control of job ratings to local school boards.

"Teachers and local school districts know what works best in their own communities," the union said in a prepared statement.

In contrast, a statewide advocacy group called High Achievement New York, which represents many business organizations, described the extension as "neither a surprise or a solution."

"What we need is for all parties to agree on an evaluation plan that contains an objective, statewide measurement of student growth," HANY said in its release. "Without it, the state may inadvertently increase student testing and undermine their drive toward equitable educational outcomes."

The state's current law on teacher evaluations, widely regarded as one of the most stringent in the nation, passed the Legislature in April 2015 with a powerful push from Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo. Test boycotts grew across the state, and Albany officials responded by imposing a four-year enforcement moratorium.

State lawmakers tried to rewrite the law last spring, but could not reach agreement.

Meanwhile, Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, who reports to the Regents, is forming two advisory groups of educators to look at possible changes in state testing and teacher evaluations. The work of the two 60-member groups originally was supposed to be completed by winter, but their deadline has been moved to as late as spring.

Tilles said Monday that he recognized the need for an extension of the moratorium, but he does not expect that action alone to stem the boycott movement. The movement's chief organizer on Long Island, Jeanette Deutermann of Bellmore, agreed.

"Nobody's celebrating, because it isn't a permanent solution," Deutermann said of the extension.

peals, its most recent petition was denied in February; a similar request was turned down several years ago, she said.

The center, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, is a watchdog and consumer advocacy group that focuses on safe