



## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

---

Release: IMMEDIATE

Date: Sept. 4, 2008

Contact: Laura J. Leonard

Phone: (919) 715-3204

---

### SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION MONTH

RALEIGH – The N.C. Division of Environmental Health, working with the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, reminds North Carolinians that food safety starts at home as North Carolina joins other states across the nation to observe National Food Safety Education Month.

“Every year, millions of people may experience one or more episodes of food-borne illness, without ever knowing that it was food that caused their illness,” said Terry L. Pierce, director of the Division of Environmental Health. “Food safety is everything from washing produce before eating it to separating raw meats from other food items. Knowing about food safety will protect you and your family from food-borne illnesses.”

This year’s theme, *Take Action to Prevent an Allergic Reaction*, focuses on the importance of reducing the incidence of food allergy reactions by knowing the most common foods for food-related allergies and how to respond to food allergy reactions.

“Food allergies are common, there is no doubt about it,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “Our department routinely tests food products for a variety of allergens, such as eggs, nuts and sulfites. We do this to make sure allergens are not in foods unless the label states their presence.”

Staff in both DEH and NCDA&CS will be conducting presentations and talks about food safety in various counties.

Environmental health and agriculture officials highlight five additional food safety techniques:

- hand-washing habits,
- washing produce thoroughly before consumption,
- separating raw meats and poultry from ready-to-eat foods and foods that will be eaten raw (such as fresh vegetables),
- keeping foods at the appropriate temperatures and
- knowing when to throw out foods.

National Food Safety Education Month, created in 1994, was established by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation's International Food Safety Council. It was developed to heighten the awareness about the importance of food safety education as well as increase consumer awareness about the importance of food safety.

For more information about North Carolina activities during NFSEM, contact Claudia Rumfelt-Wright at (919) 715-8497 or Wendy Campbell at (919) 733-7366. To obtain information about NFSEM, visit the NFSEM Web site at [www.nraef.org/nfsem](http://www.nraef.org/nfsem).

###