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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Food Safety During the Summer Months**

Brewster - Summer is here and the weather is warming up. As residents will be having picnics and be barbecuing outdoors, the Putnam County Department of Health would like to encourage some simple food safety steps to reduce the chance of getting a foodborne illness.

Meat must be cooked to the proper temperature to ensure safety. E-coli and salmonella germs can still be present in undercooked meats such as hamburger and chicken. These germs can cause severe illness and even death. While the juice color will usually change from red to gray when the meat is fully cooked, it is not a reliable test to assure meat is safe to eat. Always check the temperature with a stem-type thermometer at the center-most internal point in the food you are cooking. Be sure to cook meat to at least 130°F (for a rare steak), chicken to 165°F, and fish to 140°F.

The best protection against getting a foodborne illness is following these rules and applying them consistently:

- Foods such as eggs, milk, meats, chicken, seafood, cooked leftovers, gravies, soups, or products with these ingredients, should be stored at 40° F or lower and discarded if the temperature exceeds 40°F.
- Foods such as fruits, vegetables, juices, cheeses and condiments may be stored above 40° F for an extended time, but should be checked for appearance, odor, texture and color before being served for consumption.

- Wash hands and under fingernails thoroughly with hot water and soap before preparing food and after handling raw fish, meats and poultry.
- Wash and sanitize any surface that comes in contact with food. Refrigerators should be cleaned at least once a week.
- Wash and sanitize sponges and dishrags in the dishwasher, or sanitize them by heating in the microwave on high for at least one minute. To make a sanitizing solution, place a capful of bleach in a gallon of water and use for wiping down food surfaces. Rinse with clean water after sanitizing.
- Select frozen and refrigerated products last when food shopping. Refrigerate or freeze these items immediately on arriving home. Never thaw frozen foods at room temperature.
- Use a stem thermometer to ensure foods are at the correct temperature when storing, serving, or checking for doneness.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Cold foods should be stored at 40°F or lower. When serving hot foods, keep them hot at 140° F or higher.
- Cool leftovers quickly and refrigerate. Reheat leftovers only once to 165°F or over.
- To keep foods hot, use a heat source underneath the food, and to keep foods chilled, have the cooling source/ice packs on top of foods.
- Follow this rule if uncertain whether a food item is fresh: **WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT.**

Temperature of food can be determined by inserting a stem-type thermometer dead center into the food itself. The best method is to open the refrigerator door, remove a food item, close the door to keep the cold air in, and then measure the food temperature. Avoid unnecessary opening of the refrigerator. For more information, call the Putnam County Department of Health's Food Safety Program at (845) 808-1390.

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