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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** Friday, June 29, 2012  
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#### **Food Safety During the Summer Months**

Brewster – Warm summer weather, picnics and barbeques can present challenges to ensuring food safety. The Putnam County Department of Health would like to encourage some simple steps to prevent foodborne illness.

Meat must be cooked to the proper temperature to ensure safety. Illness causing E-coli and salmonella can be present in undercooked meats such as hamburger and chicken. These bacteria can cause severe illness and even death. The juice of the meat usually changes color when fully cooked, but relying on this alone is not sufficient. Check the food's internal temperature with a stem thermometer in the center. Cook meat to at least 130°F (for a rare steak), chicken to 165°F, hamburger to 158 °F and fish to 140°F.

Other rules to follow consistently to protect against foodborne illness include:

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

- 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.**
- 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.

Temperature of food can be determined by inserting a stem 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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