

Alabama Department of Public Health (pretend...)
Dr. Hunda Fence

**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Keeping you safe & healthy

Alabama DPH (in this scenario) is concerned about the economy. With respect to health concerns regarding dioxin, they have very few. The general stance of Alabama DPH is that there is no expert consensus on the health effects of dioxin exposure. Just because some chickens got sick does not mean that any people will, in fact, they probably will not. Evidence about dioxin comes primarily from animal tests, so we do not really know what it does to people. You might say...

“If we were to test all the chickens (the way the public is demanding) it would take too much money and time, and cause an unnecessary scare. We do not want to hurt the economy, put people out of work by closing the chicken industry down, or erode consumer confidence by causing alarm. However, the DPH is heading up an effort to test fat cores from a few chickens for their dioxin concentration. We will look at toxicology studies to determine IF there is dioxin contamination, how much might pose a risk.”

Questions for Alabama DPH and ANSWERS:

Q: Where does Dioxin come from?

A: It is an unintentional byproduct of some manufacturing processes that involve heating plastics and chlorinated compounds. It comes from waste incinerators, for example, where plastic is burned.

Q: How did it get in the chickens? How are you investigating this?

A: In our state laboratory we have tested the fat and the stomach contents of several chickens who appeared to be affected. They did have evidence of dioxin. We do suspect it came from the feed. We do not know how it got

into the chicken feed and we are cooperating with the police to determine if this was a malicious act. The people who run *Feed the World* are being questioned as to how this may have happened during their manufacturing process.

Q: What are you going to tell the public?

A: Not to panic. We do not think that at the levels found in the chickens dioxin is a public health concern..

Q: Are you, personally, concerned about the human health implications of this episode?

A: No, I am not concerned. I eat chicken all the time. But, my job is to protect the public. We will look at what toxicological evidence exists, if any, to cause alarm for human health concerns.

Q: Are you worried other meat products might be contaminated (beef, pork, etc.)?

A: That is a good question. We are looking into whether other animals may have been fed the same feed products.

Q: Did any people get sick or report problems to DPH?

A: Many people have called and we are trying to discourage callers from blocking our phone lines... No one appears to be sick, just frightened.

Q: What will you do about protecting livestock in the future?

A: That is up to the federal government, we can only make recommendations, and it is too early for that.