

FDA Lessons Learned: Salmonella Saintpaul: Tomatoes/Peppers

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Investigation Lessons

- FDA depends on epidemiology to identify outbreaks and to identify the vehicle
- FDA responds to what the epidemiology is telling us
- Many public health agencies lack epi and lab resources to effectively do their jobs
- FDA is limited in its ability to share findings with public health agencies and industry

Investigation Lessons

- Federal, state and local public health agencies need to improve detection, response and coordination
- More efforts for outreach to industry and consumer groups
- PulseNet has had a tremendous impact on foodborne disease surveillance. It detects most of these interstate outbreaks. CDC monitoring 30 – 40 clusters at any time.

Investigation Lessons

- We have to be fast and we have to be right in these investigations
- Tremendous media, public and legislative attention
- Major task developing and issuing public messages
- Stealth ingredient vehicles make investigations even more complicated

Investigation Lessons

- Water and animal contamination are frequently issues on farms or in packing sheds
- Traceback investigation continues

Traceability challenges

- Lack of unique identifier
- Repacking
- Co-mingling
- Packaging (cases) gone
- Produce no longer available
- Producing states importing as well
- Lack of rapid connectivity
- Poor record keeping
- Tracing sporadic cases

FDA Salmonella Saintpaul Workgroup

- Prepare detailed timeline and baseline Information
- FDA internal operations
 - Business process: ICS
- Interactions with CDC, States, Locals
 - 50 States: Partnership for Food Protection
 - FDA/CDC Meetings

FDA Salmonella Saintpaul Workgroup

- Interactions with industry
 - Outreach meetings
 - Harvard traceback group
 - IFT traceback contract
- Improving the science
 - Science Board: Salmonella methods

Summary and Conclusions

- FDA depends on under resourced public health agencies to identify outbreaks and implicate vehicles
- Environmental and water contamination and animals are issues in produce outbreaks
- Traceback difficulties hamper produce outbreak investigations