AFDO Releases Best Practices For Inspections During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Conducting inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic requires personnel to modify their normal routine and increase their level of safety to protect themselves and the employees of the operation they are inspecting. AFDO has developed and released best practices for those who will be doing inspections as establishments begin to open up nationally. Inspectors should consider these tips when preparing for and conducting an establishment inspection. Download the complete guidance here.

**FDA Announces Temporary Flexibility Policy Regarding Certain Labeling Requirements for Foods for Humans During COVID-19 Pandemic**

Yesterday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a guidance document to provide additional temporary flexibility in food labeling requirements to manufacturers and vending machine operators. The goal is to provide regulatory flexibility, where appropriate, to help minimize the impact of supply chain disruptions on product availability associated with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Entitled “Temporary Policy Regarding Certain Food Labeling Requirements During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency: Minor Formulation Changes and Vending Machines,” this guidance is one of several the FDA has issued to provide temporary flexibility to the food industry to help support the food supply chain and meet consumer demand during the pandemic.
Yesterday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced that it will provide flexibility regarding eligibility criteria for the qualified exemption under the Produce Safety Rule during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Because of COVID-19, state and local governments across the United States have instituted public health orders that have resulted in many restaurants and retail food establishments either closing or significantly limiting their operations, leaving many farmers without their usual buyers. The guidance issued today is intended to allow affected farmers to shift their sales away from qualified end-users while still being considered eligible for the qualified exemption. Specifically, under the temporary policy announced in the guidance, farms that are currently eligible for the qualified exemption and associated modified requirements will still be considered eligible, even if they shift sales away from qualified end-users, so long as they continue to meet the requirement that their average food sales during the previous three years total less than $500,000 (adjusted for inflation). See the guidance here.

FDA recognizes that providing flexibility to farms to allow them to shift food sales to available buyers during the COVID-19 public health emergency can help reduce food waste and food shortages. This temporary policy is intended to remain in effect only for the duration of the public health emergency, after which the FDA intends to issue additional guidance.

Qualified exempt farms must comply with modified requirements under the Produce Safety Rule, which include establishing and keeping certain records and prominently displaying their name and business address on food packaging or at the point of sale. Farms are responsible for ensuring that the food they produce is not adulterated under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) and they should use good agricultural practices to ensure the safety of their produce.

For More Information

- Temporary Policy During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Regarding the Qualified Exemption from the Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption
- Food Safety and COVID-19
CDC Releases Report on Testing Protocol for SARS-CoV-2 at a Long-Term Care Skilled Nursing Facility

Long-term care skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) are at high risk for COVID-19 outbreaks. Many SNF residents and staff members identified with COVID-19 are asymptomatic and presymptomatic. After identification of two cases of COVID-19 in an SNF in Los Angeles, universal, serial reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing of residents and staff members aided in rapid identification of additional cases and isolation and cohorting of these residents and interruption of transmission in the facility. Universal and serial RT-PCR testing in SNFs can identify cases during an outbreak, and rapid isolation and cohorting can help interrupt transmission. The CDC has issued a report about this incident so as to inform other similar situations. Read the report here.

FDA and USDA Release Recommendations for Food and Agriculture Sector Regarding PPE

On Friday, May 22, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture released recommendations to help address shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), cloth face coverings, disinfectants, and sanitation supplies in the food and agriculture industry during the
The current constraints on these supplies are causing concerns about the potential for interruptions in the food supply chain. These supplies are critical for worker safety, the continuity of the food supply, food safety, and employee/consumer confidence.

The recommendations call for the prioritization of supplies, first to the Healthcare and Public Health as well as the Emergency Services sectors, and then to the Food and Agriculture sector (as well as other Critical Infrastructures). The recommendations provide information on potential sourcing of supplies, including through private sector suppliers and state emergency management agencies. The recommendations also include information that Food and Agriculture stakeholders should provide when ordering or requesting these supplies.

For more information

- Food and Agriculture: Considerations for Prioritization of PPE, Cloth Face Coverings, Disinfectants and Sanitation Supplies During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

**CDC Updates New Guidance on Transmission of COVID-19 From Surfaces**

Recent guidance issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sheds new light on how coronavirus spreads through surfaces.

Though there is the possibility that coronavirus could be transmitted by touching a surface — and then your nose, mouth or eyes — the likelihood of that is lower than person-to-person contact, which is believed to be the primary way coronavirus is transmitted. Read the story here. See the complete updated guidance here.
FDA Publishes Report with Key Investigation Findings From 2019 Outbreaks Associated with Leafy Greens

On May 21, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration published the findings of an investigation into the contamination of romaine lettuce implicated in three outbreaks of *E. coli* O157:H7 during the Fall of 2019.

Late last year the FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state partners investigated the contamination of romaine lettuce with several strains of *E. coli* O157:H7 that resulted in three outbreaks of foodborne illness traced back to the Salinas Valley growing region in California. These outbreaks -- two multi-state and one single-state beginning in September and ending in December 2019 -- collectively resulted in 188 people falling ill. Read the report here.

---

CDC Releases Considerations Documents

Across America, states and localities are experiencing different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many have chosen to begin moving gradually and strategically toward resuming normal civic life. To help businesses and community organizations operate as safely as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, CDC released health considerations documents to support a variety of settings. The considerations documents complement other CDC resources, including decision tools released last week to help inform community setting decisions about resuming and gradually scaling up operations.

**Considerations Documents**

- Considerations for Institutes of Higher Education
- Considerations for Restaurants and Bars
- Considerations for Schools
- Considerations for Youth and Summer Camps
- Considerations for Youth Sports

**Leaders may use the tools below as they make decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- Decision Tools for Schools and Childcare Programs:
FSIS Posts After-Action Review Report for Foodborne Listeria monocytogenes Outbreak

FSIS has posted on its website an after-action review report for the investigation of a 2017–2018 outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* illnesses associated with ready-to-eat, country-cured ham. During April–November 2018, public health officials from Virginia, North Carolina, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and FSIS investigated an outbreak of four reported *L. monocytogenes* illnesses linked to ready-to-eat country-cured ham manufactured at an FSIS-regulated establishment.

This was the first reported multistate outbreak of listeriosis associated with an FSIS-regulated product since 2005. Whole genome sequencing (WGS) was instrumental in detecting this outbreak and determining its source. The investigation revealed that production practices may have led to cross-contamination and that the cooking of the product may have been insufficient to address *L. monocytogenes*.

In response to this outbreak, FSIS plans to update Directive 10,240.4, Verification Activities for the *Listeria monocytogenes* Regulation and the Ready-to-Eat (RTE) Sampling Program. Additionally, FSIS added a related study to its Food Safety Research Priorities on the FSIS website and plans to update its “Appendix A” cooking guidance in 2020.


The purpose of FSIS after-action review reports is to share lessons learned with industry and public health partners from outbreak investigations to help prevent illness and improve response. To view additional reports and learn more about outcomes of FSIS outbreak investigations, please visit https://www.fsis.usda.gov/OutbreakOutcomes.
Anyone interested in the culture of food safety is invited to attend a series of free webinars with panels of international presenters and organized by the International Association for Food Protection.

The non-profit group has thousands of members worldwide, including government leaders and employees, academics, industry representatives and others interested in food safety.

The free webinar sessions are free and open to the public, but registration is required.

The series begins May 26 and wraps up on July 22. Check out all of the webinars in the series.

AFDOSS Mary Logan Scholarship

The AFDOSS Board regrets to announce the cancellation of the 2020 Fall Conference scheduled for September in Gatlinburg. Some of the affiliate’s annual activities will continue as planned (see below about the Mary Logan scholarship), while others will be on hold until next year. Please mark your calendars now for the AFDOSS AEC 2021 in Asheville, North Carolina (Sept. 12-15, 2021; the Crowne Plaza in Asheville is booked!), and there is a contract to return to the Park Vista Doubletree in Gatlinburg in Sept. 2022.

As of this month, AFDOSS has opened the 2020-2021 Mary Logan Scholarship Application process, with applications accepted through July 15. Once the Scholarship Committee has reviewed applications and determined if there is an appropriate candidate to select, the $4,500 annual scholarship award will be awarded for the 2020-2021 school year. More details can be found here, and the new online scholarship application is available here: https://forms.gle/hw5PtC8AmwSJQ6M59 (please share with potential applicants you know in the SE region!).
WEBINAR: Food Authenticity and the AOAC International Standards and Methods Program

AOAC International, together with Food Analysis, offers an eSeminar that focuses on its standards and methods program created to identify analytical tools to better locate and characterize adulteration of foods.

Date: 2 June, 2020
Start Times:
Broadcast 1: 10am BST / 11am CEST / 2.30pm IST / 5pm SGT
Broadcast 2: 10am PDT / 1pm EDT

Register now

AFDO Webinars this week....

Keeping It Real with Cosmetic Tattooing
Overview of the reality of cosmetic tattooing including tray set, different modalities, contraindications, red flags, and the basics of eyes, brows, lips, and areola restoration.

*Registration is limited to 1,000 seats

Presenter: Jane Adler, Owner, Facial Art by Jane

Register: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 2:00PM - 3:00PM EDT

Register Now

Behavior-based Food Safety Training

Studies suggest that the provision of a hands-on format of training embedded in behavioral sciences would be more beneficial than traditional classroom-based programs. The delivery of such a program may assist in changing ones’ food safety behaviors and aid in the retention of knowledge that are necessary to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness.

I will discuss a new innovative approach to food safety training that is hands-on, interactive and heavily rooted in the behavioral sciences. The talk will also cover innovative solutions to increase food safety knowledge retention and behavioral change for foodservice workers.

*Registration is limited to 1,000 seats
Register: Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at 2:00PM - 3:00PM EDT

Register Now

FDA Laws and How They Relate to the Body Art Industry & Pigment/Material Toxicity, Chemistry, Photo-Stability, and Potential Complications in the Human Body

FDA Law and the Body Art Industry - Overview of how the FDA regulates tattoo and permanent makeup ink and the enforcement actions that have been taken.

Tattoo Pigments: Regulation, Chemistry, Photostability, and Potential Complications in the Human Body - Overview of the regulation of tattoo pigments, a little chemistry and photo stability of pigments, and the potential harm that tattoos/pigments can cause.

*Registration is limited to 1,000 seats

Presenter: Kathleen Lewis, Senior Advisor, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Register: Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 2:00PM - 3:30PM EDT

Register Now

Google Search Tips and Using Food Safety Analogies to Drive the Message Home

Google Search: What if you could type magic keywords in Google Search and get 100 or less highly relevant results instead of a mixed bag of 100,000? Turns out, you can! They're called "Google Search Operators" and they're easy to use. Charlie Kalish will walk you through his favorites for searching for food safety resources online.

Food Safety Analogies: Analogies help break down walls to understanding and are especially useful when trying to communicate food safety concepts to listeners who may not have a background in food safety. In this webinar, Charlie Kalish shares several analogies he and AFDO colleagues have used with success in food safety trainings.

*Registration is limited to 1,000 seats
Food Safety & Regulatory Compliance Consultants/Trainers

Register: Friday, May 29, 2020 at 2:00PM - 3:00PM EDT

AFDO Professional Development Series Adds More Offerings

AFDO is offering a series of FREE webinars and web-based training courses that can be utilized for staff development. AFDO anticipates providing a variety of courses and webinars along with our regular podcasts over the next several weeks. Because we are continuously developing new offerings, please visit this webpage on a regular basis to look for the latest training courses.

In addition, you can access the AFDO podcast catalog at the following links. Videos can be found at https://afdo.podbean.com/ and audio podcasts at https://afdoaudio.podbean.com/. Or download the AFDO app (IT'S FREE) so you can listen or watch on the go. The app is available for iPhone and Android.

No CEU's or Certificates of Attendance will be available for these sessions.

FDA Continues to Answer COVID-19 Questions & Update Documents
The Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Food and Cosmetic Information Center (FCIC)/Technical Assistance Network (TAN) continue to released responses for questions of interest to AFDO members regarding COVID-19. These answers can be found here.

It's important to check back frequently for the latest as well as visit the AFDO COVID-19 Resource Page.

This is in addition to updating its COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions page to include guidance regarding food products. Real time updates of the FDA's Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) page can be found at https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19. Updates are dated so you are able to tell what information has been added each time.

As part of the AFDO commitment to providing information and resources to members and the those we serve, we continue to add resources to the COVID-19 Resource Page. We continue to offer links to information that has been developed by our partnerships and other subject matter experts. If you identify resources that should be considered or your organization develops some of your own that can be shared with other members, please email them or the link to bbenschoter@afdo.org. We appreciate everyone who helps us be more prepared.

FDA Updates

FDA Publishes Report with Key Investigation Findings From 2019 Outbreaks Associated with Leafy Greens

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration published the findings of an investigation into the contamination of romaine lettuce implicated in three outbreaks of E. coli O157:H7 during the Fall of 2019. Late last year the FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state partners investigated the
single-state beginning in September and ending in December 2019 -- collectively resulted in 188 people falling ill.

Please see below for further information,

Constituent Update,  
Statement,  
Investigation Report,  

The investigation was conducted at several farms identified in the outbreak traceback, as well as at other businesses and public access areas and resulted in several key findings:

1. Each of these three outbreaks, identified in the report as Outbreaks A, B and C was caused by distinctly different strains of *E. coli* O157:H7 as determined by whole genome sequencing (WGS) analysis;
2. Traceback investigations of multiple illness sub-clusters and supply chain information identified a common grower with multiple ranches/fields which supplied romaine lettuce during the timeframe of interest to multiple business entities associated with all three outbreaks.
3. The same strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 that caused Outbreak A was found in two different brands of fresh-cut salads containing romaine lettuce in 2019;
4. This same outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 in Outbreak A was detected in a fecal--soil composite sample taken from a cattle grate on public land less than two miles upslope from a produce farm with multiple fields tied to the outbreaks by the traceback investigations;
5. Other strains of Shiga toxin-producing *E.coli* (STEC), while not linked to any of the outbreaks, were found in closer proximity to where romaine lettuce crops were grown, including two samples from a border area of a farm immediately next to cattle grazing land in the hills above leafy greens fields and two samples from on-farm water drainage basins.

The FDA considers adjacent or nearby land use for cattle grazing as the most likely contributing factor associated with these three outbreaks. While the agency could not confirm a definitive source or route(s) of contamination of the romaine fields, the agency considers indirect transmission of fecal material from adjacent and nearby lands from water run-off, wind, animals or vehicles to the romaine fields, or to the agricultural water sources used to grow the romaine, as possible routes of contamination.

These findings, together with the findings from earlier leafy greens outbreaks, suggest that a potential contributing factor has been the proximity of cattle—a persistent source of *E. coli* O157:H7 and other STEC—to the produce fields identified in traceback investigations. These key findings reinforce our concern about the possible impacts of nearby and adjacent land use on the safety of leafy green crops and further underscore the importance of implementing appropriate risk-based preventive measures to reduce the potential for contamination of leafy greens.

Because of the reoccurring nature of outbreaks associated with leafy greens, the FDA recently released a [2020 Leafy Greens STEC Action Plan](https://www.fda.gov/food/cfsan-constituent-updates/fda-publishes-report-key-investigation-findings-2019-outbreaks-associated-leafy-greens), which outlines a three-pronged approach for tackling this problem. It describes the FDA's plans for working with industry, federal partners, state...
Food safety is a shared responsibility that involves food producers, distributors, manufacturers, retailers, and regulators. FDA is committed to working with these stakeholders to implement this action plan to ensure that America’s food supply remains among the safest in the world.

For More Information

- Factors Potentially Contributing to the Contamination of Romaine Lettuce Implicated in the Three Outbreaks of E. coli O157:H7 During the Fall of 2019
- 2020 Leafy Greens STEC Action Plan
- FDA Outlines 2020 Action Plan to Help Advance the Safety of Leafy Greens
- Outbreak Investigation of E.coli: Romaine from Salinas, California (November 2019)
- Outbreak Investigation of E.coli: Salad Mix (December 2019)

Other Training Opportunities

Preventive Controls for Human Foods and Foreign Supplier Verification Programs

Intentional Adulteration Conducting Vulnerability Assessments (IAVA) – 1 Day
Course Information/Schedule Page

Preventive Controls for Human Foods Course (PCQI) – 3 Day
Course Information/Schedule Page

Preventive Controls for Human Foods Course (PCQI) Blended Course Part 2 – NEW
Course Information/Schedule Page

Foreign Supplier Verification Programs Course (FSVP) – 2 Day
Course Information/Schedule Page
EAS Consulting Group Training

EAS Consulting Group Offers Complimentary Webinar Best Practices for Food Manufacturers, Restaurants and Food Distributors During the COVID-19 Pandemic – Conducted in Spanish

Top Advances in Food Safety Technology
June 4, 2020 at 2:00PM

Virtual Book Tour
Food Safety Lessons for Cannabis-Infused Edibles
May 27, 2020 at 1pm eastern

Dietary Supplement Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) Compliance Seminar
September 29-30, 2020 • Dallas, TX

The Food Safety Doctor LLC
Promoting Public Health and Food Safety through Training and FSMA Awareness

While sheltering in place, The Food Safety Doctor LLC is offering

- ONLINE Preventive Controls for Human Foods (PCQI) Courses
  - June 2 - 4
  - Click here to access the schedule of online PCQI Courses

- ONLINE Foreign Supplier Verification Courses (FSVP-QI) Courses
  - June (Date Pending)
Laws and Regulations Committee Updates

Laws and Regulations Committee Update
A collection of current food, drug, device, and consumer product regulatory issues and news

May 18 - 19, 2020
May 21 - 21, 2020