AFDO STRIVES TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH...

Happy Thanksgiving from AFDO
AFDO wants to wish you a very happy Thanksgiving. The AFDO office will be closed on Thursday, November 28 and Friday, November 29, the office will reopen on Monday, December 2. There will no enews the week of December 2nd.

Thanksgiving Prep Essentials!
These essential Thanksgiving food safety tips and safe recipes will set everyone up for a happy holiday!

- Start with the 11 Tips for a Safe Thanksgiving Feast Flyer in English and in Spanish!
- Classic Roast Turkey recipe includes food safety instructions!
- Print and have on hand the holiday meal flyer to decode turkey thawing and cooking times — you'll need a food thermometer!
- Check out more free downloads - recipes, activity sheets, placemats and social graphics.
Food Safety Tips for Your Holiday Turkey
Handling poultry (chickens and turkey) incorrectly and undercooking it are the most common problems that lead to foodborne disease outbreaks linked to poultry. Follow these four tips to help you safely prepare your next holiday turkey meal. Read more from CDC.

FDA Extends Comment Period on the New Era of Smarter Food Safety
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is extending the comment period by 15 days to allow stakeholders more time to provide input on the New Era of Smarter Food Safety. The comment period was set to close on November 20, 2019, 30 days after the October 21 public meeting on this new approach that FDA is planning to take to strengthen its protection of the food supply.

The comment period will now close on December 5, 2019 in response to requests for additional time to submit comments. Read Article and/or submit comments...

The Food and Agriculture Sector Membership Meeting - Update
The Food and Agriculture Sector Membership Meeting took place on November 19-20, 2019 in Arlington, VA. The topics ranged from changes with USDA APHIS to drought response. The Sector is looking for state participants to assist on editing the 2020 Sector Specific Plan. If you are interested in participating in these revisions, please contact the AFDO Food Defense Committee Chairs, April Hunt or Jennifer Pierquet.

The FDA Office of Food Defense gave an update on Intentional Adulteration Rule implementation. FDA is looking to start training their inspectors on the first phase of intentional adulteration inspections called Quick Checks in early 2020. State inspectors will see training on this inspection type by summer 2020.

African Swine Fever (ASF) was another topic of great interest during the meeting. Multiple presentation covered the current research on the disease and prevention strategies including the multi-state exercise that took place this year. The AFDO Food Defense Committee plans to host a webinar on ASF in early 2020 in conjunction with the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO).

---

**Investigation of *E. coli* O157:H7 Outbreak Linked to Romaine from Salinas, California November 2019**

**Recommendation**

FDA, CDC, and state health authorities are investigating an outbreak of illnesses caused by *E. coli* O157:H7 in the U.S. Epidemiologic, laboratory, and
Consumers: Consumers should not eat romaine lettuce harvested from Salinas, California. Additionally, consumers should not eat products identified in the recall announced by the USDA on November 21, 2019.

Romaine lettuce may be voluntarily labeled with a harvest region. If romaine lettuce has “Salinas” on the label in any form (whether alone or with the name of another location) do not eat it. Throw it away or return it to the place of purchase. If romaine lettuce does not have information about harvest region or does not indicate that it has been grown indoors (i.e., hydroponically- and greenhouse-grown), throw it away or return it to the place of purchase.

Consumers ordering salad containing romaine at a restaurant or at a salad bar should ask the staff whether the romaine came from Salinas. If it did, or they do not know, do not eat it.

At this time, romaine lettuce that was harvested outside of the Salinas region has not been implicated in this outbreak investigation. Hydroponically- and greenhouse-grown romaine, which is voluntarily labeled as “indoor grown,” from any region does not appear to be related to the current outbreak. There is no recommendation for consumers to avoid using romaine harvested from these other sources.

Restaurants and Retailers: Restaurants and retailers should not serve or sell romaine harvested from Salinas, California. If you do not know the source of your romaine lettuce, and if you cannot obtain that information from your supplier, you should not serve, nor sell it.

Suppliers and Distributors: Suppliers, distributors and others in the supply chain should not ship or sell romaine harvested in Salinas, California. If the source of the romaine lettuce is unknown, you should not ship, nor sell the product.

For Restaurants, Retailers, Suppliers and Distributors: Currently, the FDA does not have enough traceback information to identify the specific source of the contamination that would allow us to request a targeted recall from specific growers. At this stage in the investigation, the most efficient way to ensure that contaminated romaine is off the market would be for industry to voluntarily withdraw product grown in Salinas, and to withhold distribution of Salinas romaine for the remainder of the growing season in Salinas. FDA has made this request of industry.
greenhouse-grown romaine, which is voluntarily labeled as “indoor grown,” from any region does not appear to be related to the current outbreak. There is no recommendation for consumers or retailers to avoid using romaine harvested from these other sources.

**Background**

According to the CDC, as of November 21, 2019, 40 people infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported from 16 states. The case patients report that illnesses started on dates ranging from September 24, 2019 to November 10, 2019.

The Maryland Department of Health identified *E. coli* O157:H7 in an unopened package of Ready Pac Bistro® Chicken Caesar Salad collected from an ill person’s home in Maryland. Analysis of this salad, through Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS), has linked strain *E. coli* O157:H7 to three Maryland cases and the multi-state outbreak.

The FDA and state partners are conducting a traceback investigation to trace romaine exposures to the source. Preliminary information indicates that ill people in Maryland were exposed to romaine lettuce harvested in Salinas, California.

FDA is deploying investigators to the farms in question to try to determine the source and extent of the contamination. More information will be forthcoming as the investigation proceeds.

Additionally, state partners are conducting laboratory analyses of romaine lettuce samples from case patients potentially linked to the outbreak.

The Salinas region as defined by the United Fresh Produce Association and the Produce Marketing Association Romaine Taskforce Report includes: Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, San Benito, and Monterey counties in California.

Genetic analysis of the *E. coli* O157:H7 strains from patients in this current outbreak are similar to strains of *E. coli* O157:H7 associated with a previous outbreak from the Fall of 2017 and the Fall of 2018 that affected consumers in both Canada and the U.S. The 2017 outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 was associated with leafy greens in the U.S. and romaine in Canada. The 2018 outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 was associated with romaine in both countries.
Outbreak Investigation of Hepatitis A Potentially Linked to Fresh Conventional Blackberries from Fresh Thyme Farmers Market, Fall 2019

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state and local partners, are investigating a multistate outbreak of hepatitis A illnesses in Indiana, Nebraska, and Wisconsin potentially linked to fresh conventional (non-organic) blackberries from the grocery store, Fresh Thyme Farmers Market.

Based on the epidemiological information collected in the investigation thus far, ill patients reported consuming fresh conventional blackberries from Fresh Thyme Farmers Market stores in three states: Indiana, Nebraska, and Wisconsin.

However, traceback information to date shows that these berries came from a distribution center that ships fresh berries to Fresh Thyme Farmers Market stores in 11 states: IA, IL, IN, KY, MI, MO, MN, NE, OH, PA, and WI. As this investigation continues, the FDA will work with our federal and state partners to obtain additional information during the traceback investigation and will update this advisory as more information becomes available.

Recommendation

The FDA is urging consumers to not eat any fresh conventional blackberries if purchased between September 9 and September 30, 2019, from Fresh Thyme Farmers Market stores in the 11 states mentioned above. People who purchased the fresh blackberries and then froze those berries for later consumption should not eat these berries. They should be thrown away.

If consumers purchased fresh conventional blackberries from Fresh Thyme Farmers Market stores in the 11 states listed above between September 9-30, ate those berries in the last two weeks, and have not been vaccinated for the hepatitis A virus (HAV), they should consult with their healthcare professional to determine whether post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is indicated. PEP is recommended for unvaccinated people who have been exposed to HAV in the last two weeks. Those with evidence of previous hepatitis A vaccination or
Contact your healthcare provider if you think you may have become ill from eating these blackberries, or if you believe that you have eaten these berries in the last two weeks.

Read the full update

In Puerto Rico, a new molecular bacteriology lab allows better control of foodborne outbreaks

Sometimes a new facility is more than just four walls and a roof. In Puerto Rico, it was the springboard to improving foodborne outbreak response on the whole island.

In May 2019, Puerto Rico inaugurated a new molecular bacteriology laboratory at the Puerto Rico Department of Health’s laboratory (PRDOH) in San Juan. The original laboratory had been out of commission since Hurricane Maria devastated the island in 2017, and was rebuilt with APHL contracting support for repair and redesign. Today, the new laboratory boasts additional space for laboratory instruments, supplies and staff, as well as a reliable roof. With the molecular bacteriology laboratory up and running, the PRDOH could take on a top goal: implementing whole genome sequencing (WGS) for foodborne outbreak response. WGS provides faster detection of pathogens than alternative methods, leading to rapid implementation of prevention and control measures and speedier investigation of foodborne outbreaks. Like other members of PulseNet, the US network for detection of foodborne outbreaks,
APHL helped the PRDOH by procuring Illumina’s MiSeq Sequencing Platform and supporting installation and hands-on training for laboratory staff. The association also facilitated staff travel to CDC headquarters in Atlanta for a deeper dive into WGS methodology and procured BioNumerics software to upgrade the laboratory’s database so it could support WGS data.

To date, the molecular bacteriology laboratory has made excellent progress toward implementing WGS methods for foodborne pathogens. The laboratory is now working toward validation of these methods; once validation is completed it will apply for certification under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments Program, which oversees standards and certification for human testing in the US. The laboratory also plans to introduce a new tool—matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization – time of flight (MALDI-TOF) mass spectrometry—as a complement to WGS in the effort to detect foodborne outbreaks.

---

**Strengthening Data Defensibility in Government Human and Animal Food Testing Laboratories Through Accreditation: Lessons Learned From the FDA Accreditation Support Program**

For food safety agencies, the ability to quickly remove an adulterated product from commerce is essential to protecting public health. Often, such removal follows the detection of a contaminant (e.g., microbiologic, chemical, radiologic) in a product through rigorous and timely laboratory testing in a government human or animal food testing laboratory. State or federal regulatory agencies, such as the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), and state food safety regulatory programs, rely on data from such testing to support enforcement actions (e.g., recalls). A critical component in establishing defensibility of these data is laboratory accreditation. Obtaining International Organization for Standardization/International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC) 17025 accreditation—an internationally recognized standard of competency to which laboratories are encouraged to adhere to be technically...
Competent—requires a thorough review of a laboratory's quality management system by an accrediting body that is a full member and signatory of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation, an international organization of various accreditation bodies, including those responsible for ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation (https://ilac.org). The accrediting body reviews the laboratory’s procedures and records, and granting accreditation certifies that the laboratory is competent to perform specific tests that support regulatory decisions about food safety. Regulatory agencies are confident that the data produced by an accredited laboratory are defensible (if challenged in court) and reliable (ie, consistent across repeated measurements), facilitating a rapid response to a contaminated product. Read more....

Norovirus: Just-In Time Refresher for Retail Food Industry and Regulators - Recording Available

Winter is coming, and that means norovirus associated with retail food establishments.

This webinar will include the following:

101 about norovirus and why it is often associated with retail food establishment outbreaks; Prevention strategies for norovirus; and Best practices in norovirus investigation.

Presenters include:

- Dr. Laura Brown, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - View Slides
- Dr. Aron Hall, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - View Slides
- DJ Irving, Tennessee Department of Health - View Slides
- Dr. Ernest M. Julian, Rhode Island Department of Health - View Slides

View Recordings
IAFP Travel Awards - Apply Now!

Be recognized for your work in food safety!

Apply Now to Attend IAFP 2020!

Cleveland, Ohio ● August 2–5, 2020

Applications are being accepted for the following:

- Travel Award: for State or Provincial Health or Agricultural Department Employees (North America only)
- Travel Award for Food Safety Professionals in a Country with a Developing Economy

Deadline: February 18, 2020

More information or to apply

As State Legislatures Wind Down Looking at the Year Preps for the Future
Doug Farquhar, Program Director for Environmental Health for the National Conference of State Legislatures, and discussed what has happened in 2019 and what state regulators should be looking at for the future.

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.

---

New CIFOR Food Safety Programs Reference Guide

The Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR) recently published a new Food Safety Programs Reference Guide, which provides a snapshot of current governmental efforts around foodborne illness in the US and covers a wide range of topics including data sharing, regulatory program standards and collaboration efforts. APHL led the production of this guide, which will help public health agencies align activities, conduct collaborative projects, implement common strategies and avoid costly duplication of efforts.

---

National Environmental Assessment Reporting System (NEARS) Funding Opportunity

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is offering a new funding opportunity to support state, tribal, local or territorial governmental food safety agencies not yet participating in NEARS. The purpose of the grant is to expand participation in NEARS, which is a surveillance system that captures environmental assessment data from foodborne illness outbreak investigations.
Now Accepting Applications for the 2020 Seafood HACCP and SCP Train-the-Trainer Course

The AFDO/SHA 2020 Seafood HACCP Train-the-Trainer Course is now open and we are accepting applications. For more information pertaining to the Course and/or to download an application, please visit our website, http://www.afdo.org/page-1856559.

The 2020 Course is scheduled for February 25-27, 2020 in New York, New York at the Hyatt Centric Times Square New York, 135 West 45th Street, New York, NY 10036. The registration fee is $975 which covers all training materials, meeting facilities and instruction. Deadline to apply is February 3, 2020. The Course will be filled on a first come basis.

If you have any questions about the Course, please contact Alena King at aking@afdo.org or call (717) 757-2888.

NEW! HACCP/AQUACULTURE Training Course:

A new Seafood HACCP Alliance/AFDO training course for aquaculture product safety is nearing completion with expectations for introduction in Train-the-Trainer sessions beginning in 2020.

This course and accompanying training materials will complement the current series of SHA training materials (https://www.flseagrant.org/seafood/haccp/) that are used in conjunction with the FDA Hazards Guidance for all seafood products (new 2019 edition pending/see update below). The new course includes a HACCP Aquaculture training Supplement (Fig 1.), supporting slide sets and HACCP models. These training materials are focused on the primary audience of processors and importers that remain obligated for HACCP compliance, and the contents will be useful for all related audiences in production through retail operations and respective regulation. Currently, following adoption in the SHA/AFDO Training Protocol, the
support basic HACCP training and experience. All participants will receive a Letter of Recognition for course completion. If participants have completed prior seafood HACCP courses approved by SHA/AFDO, (i.e., Basic classroom course or Segment one internet course) they can receive an AFDO recorded Certificate for Course Completion. In response, additional parallel training programs are in preparation by partnering programs intended for farming operations. Together, these aquaculture training programs will address the prevailing food safety problems including use of antibiotics and potential environmental contaminants, and recommended controls pertinent to HACCP compliance. The progressive course development included a series of pilot sessions for both domestic and international audiences (Portsmouth, NH-June 21; Annapolis, MD-Sep 25; and Chennai, India- Oct 21/Fig2.). Read more...

It's time to start thinking about AFDO Awards...

Do you know of someone that deserves recognition? AFDO's awards are presented annually at the Annual Educational Conference during the Wiley Award banquet. The awards are administered by the Awards Committee Chair, with subcommittees for the Wiley and Associate Member that are chaired by the immediate past recipient.

Here's a list of each AFDO Award:

Achievement
Industry Associate Member
FDA News

FDA Releases 2016-2017 NARMS Integrated Summary, Streamlines Reporting Format

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS), its partners in the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS), released the 2016-2017 NARMS Integrated Summary. The new streamlined format will replace the annual NARMS Integrated Reports and enable NARMS partners to issue more timely public updates in the future.

The NARMS Integrated Summary draws upon antimicrobial resistance patterns in bacteria isolated from humans (by CDC), raw retail meats (by FDA), and animals at slaughter (by USDA) to provide key takeaways on rates of resistance to the most important antimicrobial agents.

Read more...

Vacancy Announcement: Associate Commissioner Regulatory Affairs

The 21st Century Cures Act was enacted on December 13, 2016 and Section 3072 of the Act grants the Commissioner of Food and Drugs the authority to appoint and set the annual rate of pay for outstanding and qualified candidates to scientific, technical, or professional positions that support the development, review, and regulation of medical products.

The positions listed below are being filled under an excepted hiring authority, Title 21, Section 3072 of the 21st Century Cures Act. The candidate selected for these positions will serve under a career or career-conditional appointment.
Other Training Opportunities

Preventive Controls for Human Foods and Foreign Supplier Verification Programs

Preventive Controls for Human Foods Course (PCQI)
Course Information

Foreign Supplier Verification Programs Course (FSVP)
Course Information

Intentional Adulteration Conducting Vulnerability Assessments (IAVA)
Course Information

EAS Consulting Group Training

Dietary Supplements and FSMA Compliance – Fallacy or Fact?
December 4, 2019
Tips to Streamlining the Drug Master File Process
December 13, 2019
The Food Safety Doctor LLC
Promoting Public Health and Food Safety through Training and FSMA Awareness

FSPCA Intentional Adulteration Vulnerability Assessments Qualified Individual (IAVA-QI) Training

1. January 29, 2020: Tampa, Florida
2. February 5, 2020: Grand Rapids, Michigan
3. February 26, 2020: San Juan (Dorado) Puerto Rico
4. March 17, 2020: Singapore, Singapore
5. April 1, 2020: New Orleans Louisiana

Register here

Laws and Regulations Committee Updates

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

November 18 - 19, 2019
November 20 - 21, 2019

Back to top