



Minnesota Rapid Response Team

FY 2020 Highlights

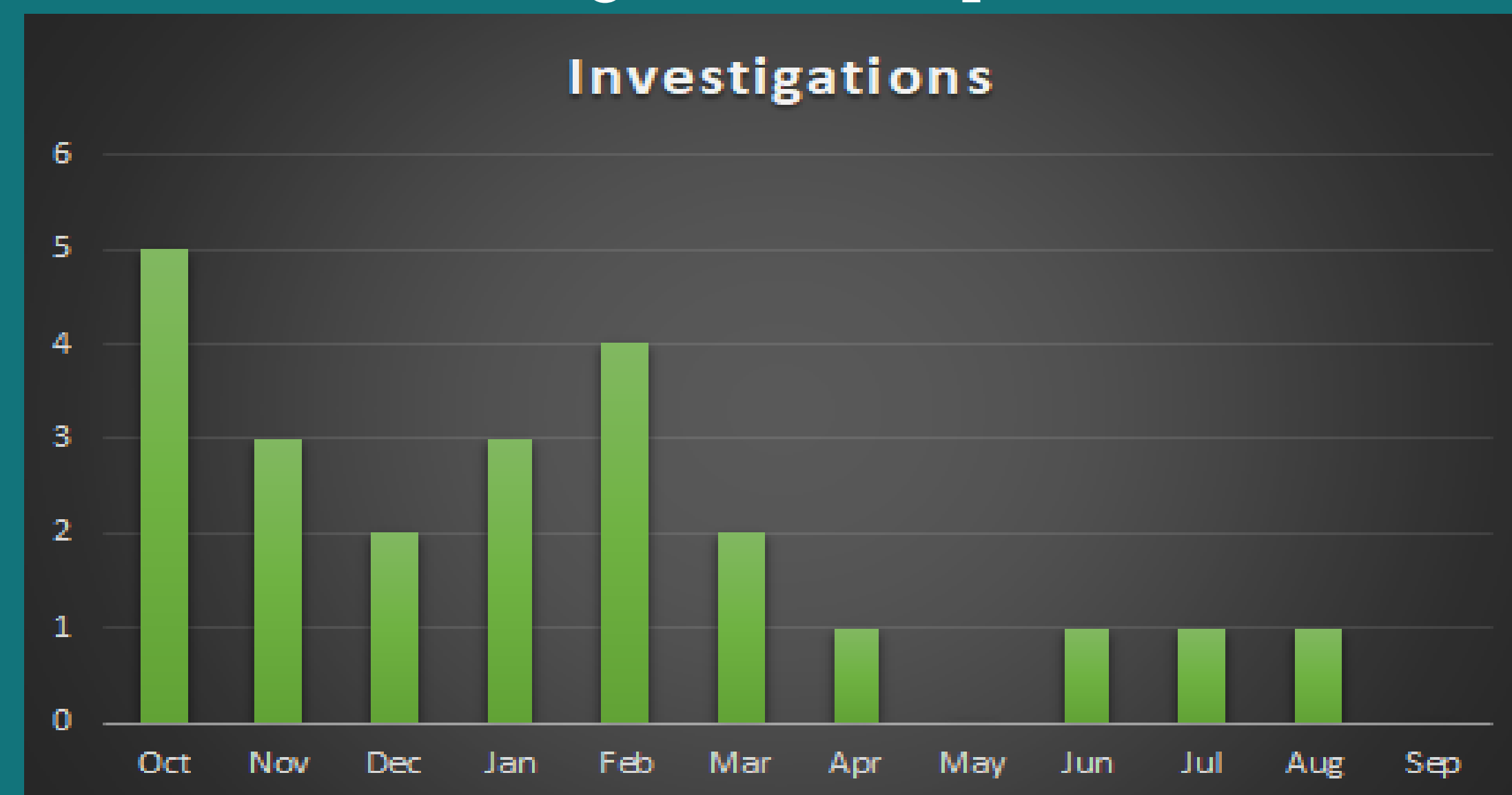


INVESTIGATIONS

by the numbers

21

investigations / responses



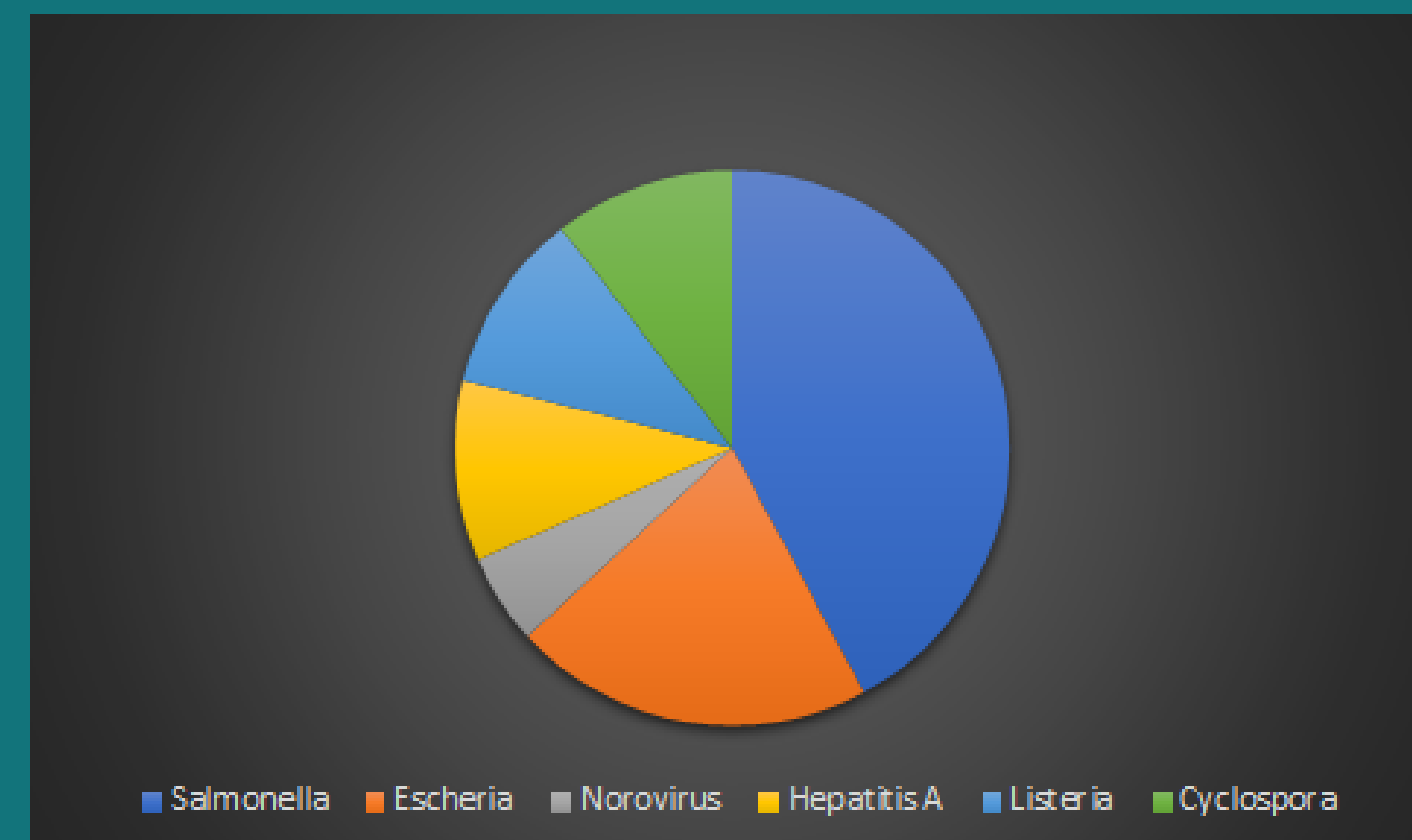
Investigations Initiated by Month

20

with human illness

20

in which a pathogen was identified



11

Traceback investigations

8

Resulted in a recall

Peaches - Not So Peachy

On 8/7/20, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Rapid Response Team (RRT) was notified by Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Epidemiologist Sean Buuck, of an emerging *Salmonella* Enteritidis outbreak. MDH requested that MDA begin a traceback of Aldi products from case purchase history.

On 8/12/20, MDA was notified by the FDA that the outbreak included seven states, with 37 cases. No food item was definitively linked, but there was a strong signal for peach exposure; many of the cases reporting buying peaches from Aldi.

A call was held between federal agencies and affected states on 8/18/20. The FDA asked MDA RRT to move forward with traceback of Minnesota's reported Target exposures, in addition to Aldi exposures. Investigators determined there was enough evidence that suggested peaches from Aldi were a significant vehicle for the outbreak and that communication would go out to the public the following day.

A consumer notification was issued on 8/19/20, notifying the public that fresh peaches from Wawona Packing Company were being recalled due to contamination with *Salmonella* Enteritidis. That same day, Target was asked to share which distribution centers were impacted by the recall. On 8/22/20, Wawona Packing Company issued a consumer notification, recalling fresh bagged and loose peaches.

News Release
August 19, 2020

Contact Information

Salmonella cases linked to fresh peaches

State health and agriculture officials advise Minnesotans not to eat fresh, whole peaches supplied by Wawona Packing Co.

State health and food safety officials are warning Minnesota consumers not to eat fresh, whole peaches supplied by Wawona Packing Company and purchased at retail locations including Aldi and Target after linking *Salmonella* infections to the produce. This includes both bagged and individual ("by the pound" or "by the each") peaches.



Joint Investigation at Buffet

On 3/5/20, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Epidemiologist Amy Saupe, notified Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Rapid Response Team (RRT) of a potential listeriosis outbreak associated with eating at China Buffet in Alexandria, MN. Two cases were identified, both having eaten at the restaurant in question on 2/15/20 around noon. The local cluster also matched a national cluster with four cases in three states. The cluster also matched a surveillance sample of cut watermelon sourced from J&J Distributing, a Minnesota facility, which had been sampled and tested in Michigan.

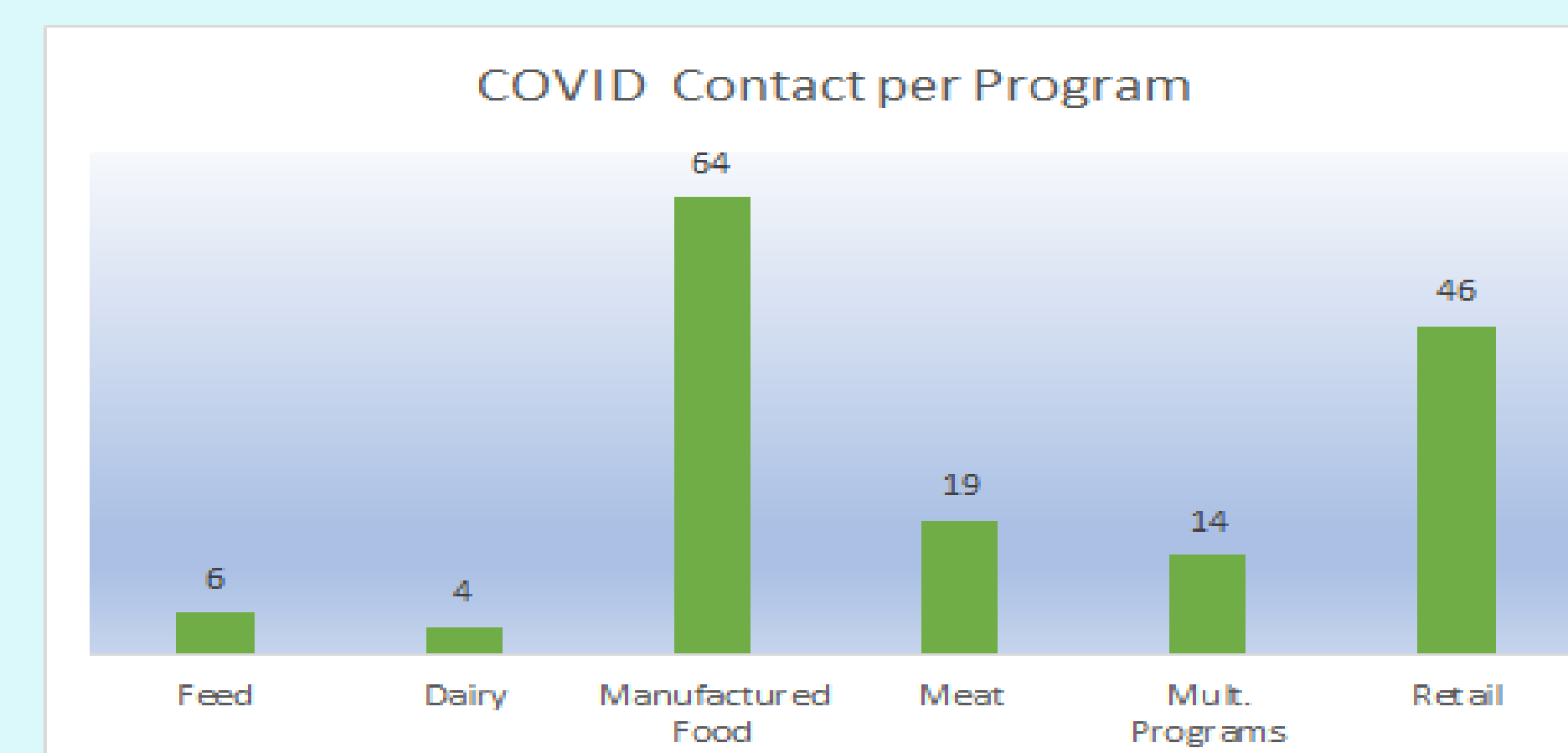
The following day, MDH requested MDA assistance in food sampling at the restaurant. MDH expressed interest in sampling foods that were common vehicles for *Listeria monocytogenes*, specifically sprouts, green beans, and melon. It was noted that neither case reported eating sprouts or melon, and one of the two cases reported eating green beans. MDA Retail Food Program inspection staff visited China Buffet and collected green beans, mung bean sprouts, and honeydew melon and all samples were analyzed by the MDA Microbiology Laboratory.

On 3/12/20, the MDA Microbiology Laboratory reported a presumptive positive result for *Listeria monocytogenes* on a mung bean sprout sample. The mung bean sprouts that were available at the restaurant at the time of the inspection and sampling were sourced from Calco Sprouts, Inc. though Sysco Distribution. However, upon reviewing the purchase records from the restaurant, Calco sprouts were not in the restaurant at the time of exposure. The sample was sent to MDH for whole genome sequencing. The sample was confirmed as positive and closely-related to the watermelon samples and human cases by WGS on 3/16/20. RRT contacted the MDA Produce Safety Program, which oversees regulation of sprouters. RRT also notified MDH, Calco Sprouts, and Sysco. RRT obtained the customer list from Calco to cross reference with illnesses.

RRT requested that MDA's Produce Safety Program conduct a document review and environmental assessment at Calco Sprouts, Inc. An MDA Produce Safety Program inspector conducted a document review and investigation at Calco on 3/19/20. No issues or concerns were identified during the environmental assessment. No cross-contamination was identified. Due to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, the restaurant was closed and not in operation following the environmental assessment at Calco.

COVID-19 Disrupts Daily Work

In March of 2020, the State of Minnesota was thrown for a loop when the COVID-19 global pandemic hit our state with full force. While it was declared a national emergency, Minnesota's Governor Walz declared a peacetime emergency and issued a "stay at home" order. All MDA staff (and RRT) now work from their home offices. The MDA Incident Management Team (IMT) was stood up and RRT began participating in the Planning Section in the Planning Section Chief (PSC) and Deputy PSC. As COVID infections increased, foodborne illness investigations began to decline. MDA RRT was asked to help the COVID response team with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) by contacting MDA firms with COVID clusters among employees and ensuring the firms were aware of best practices. MDA RRT began to hold planning meetings with MDH and local public health on how best to tackle the mounting number of affected firms. It was decided early on that a contact tracker was necessary to best keep count of the firms contacted and the details of the contact. When MDA was notified of three or more employees, RRT would establish contact with the firm. A call with the firm, MDH, RRT and local public health was scheduled. Meeting topics included best practices and employee testing, as well as answering any questions from the firm. As of November 2020, RRT has made contact with over 170 firms. These include Retail Food, Manufactured Food, Dairy, Meat, and Animal Food firms. Due to the overwhelming amount of firms during an increase in cases in October 2020, tactics were changed. The threshold for a call moved to ten positive employees.



Uneviscerated Pet Treats

On 1/31/20, a Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Feed Inspector identified uneviscerated fish sold as pet treats during a routine sampling assignment. Program management requested that the inspector return to the pet food retail location where the treats were sampled to issue a withdraw from distribution (WFD) order, pulling the treats from market. The Feed Program notified the MDA RRT of the sample results as well as the retail location and distributor.

On 2/19/2020, MDA RRT notified the FDA Minneapolis District Office (HAF1W). MDA identified the distributor as Pet Food Experts of De Plaines, IL. On 3/23/2020, FDA announced a voluntary recall of Icelandic Plus Fish treats.

IcelandicPlus LLC Voluntarily Recalls Whole Capelin Fish Pet Treats Because Product Exceeds FDA Size Restrictions

When a company announces a recall, market withdrawal, or safety alert, the FDA posts the company's announcement as a public service. FDA does not endorse either the product or the company.

[Read Announcement](#) [View Product Photos](#)

Summary

Company Announcement Date:

March 19, 2020

FDA Publish Date:

March 23, 2020

Product Type:

Animal & Veterinary

Food & Beverages

Pet Food

Foodborne Illness

Reason for Announcement:

Potential for Clostridium botulinum

Company Name:

IcelandicPlus LLC

Brand Name:

Icelandic+

Product Description:

Whole Capelin Fish Pet Treats



Company Announcement

Out of an abundance of caution IcelandicPlus LLC of Ft. Washington, PA, is recalling its Capelin Pet Treats because some of the fish have exceeded the FDA compliance guideline for fish larger than 5 inches. The FDA has determined that salt-cured, dried, or fermented un-eviscerated fish

Contact

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