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Focus on China

Chinese study unlocks clues to fight African swine fever

Chinese scientists have unraveled the three dimensional structure of the African swine fever virus, laying a solid foundation for developing effective and safe vaccines against the disease.

The research, jointly conducted by scientists at the Institute of Biophysics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Harbin Veterinary Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, was published in the latest issue of the academic journal Science.

Scientists successfully isolated the epidemic strain of the African swine fever virus, which is spreading in China. It took the research team four months to collect over 100 TB of high-quality data.

The research showed the virus has a unique structure of five layers: the outer membrane, capsid, double-layer inner membrane, core shell and genome.

It contains more than 30,000 protein sub-units, forming a spherical particle with a diameter of about 260 nanometers.

The study identified structural proteins of the virus, revealing potential protective antigens and key information on the epitope, the part of an antigen molecule to which an antibody attaches itself.

The research also showed the complex arrangement and interaction mode of the structural proteins, and proposed the possible assembly mechanism of the virus,

providing an important clue as to how it invades host cells and evades and antagonizes the host antiviral immunity.

International News

Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards 2019 Updates

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today issued revised food safety standards for state regulatory programs that oversee food facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold foods. These regulatory program standards, known as the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards (MFRPS), were first issued by the agency in May 2007 and are updated every three years. The 2019 changes include updates to defined terms, new appendices and job aides, as well as updates to the current standards.

The FDA established a committee comprised of officials from the FDA and state agencies responsible for the regulation and inspection of food facilities to develop and update the MFRPS as a set of quality standards for manufactured food regulatory programs.

The regulatory program standards are comprised of ten standards designed to protect the public from foodborne illness and injury. These elements include the program's regulatory foundation, staff training, inspection, quality assurance, food defense preparedness and response, foodborne illness and incident investigation, enforcement, education and outreach, resource management, laboratory resources, and program assessment.

The MFRPS are an important component in establishing the national Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS). The goal of the MFRPS is to implement a nationally

integrated, risk-based, food safety system focused on protecting public health. The MFRPS establish a uniform basis for measuring and improving the performance of prevention, intervention, and response activities of manufactured food regulatory programs in the United States. The standards are designed to help federal and state programs better direct their regulatory activities toward reducing foodborne illness.

FDA Publishes List of Records Required Under FSVP



The Foreign Supplier Verification Programs (FSVP) final rule, established through the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), requires importers to verify that the food they are

importing into the United States has been produced in a manner that meets applicable U.S. food safety standards.

To do this, importers are required to develop, implement, and maintain a Foreign Supplier Verification Program which includes verification activities and records of those activities for each imported food from each foreign supplier. During an FSVP inspection, the FDA investigator will review the importer's records to determine their compliance with the FSVP regulation. To help importers determine the FSVP records they should develop and maintain, the FDA has made available a list of records required by the FSVP regulation.

This list of records is organized based on the sections of the FSVP regulation so that importers can readily determine the required records for the sections that apply to them. Importers should note that not every record on the list will be applicable to them, so they will need to determine whether they are subject to an exemption, standard FSVP requirements, or modified FSVP requirements.

FSVP compliance dates differ according to a number of factors including the size of the foreign supplier; the nature of the importer; and whether the foreign supplier is required to meet the requirements of the Preventive Controls for Human Food, the Preventive Controls for Animal Food, or the Produce Safety regulations. For more information on FSVP compliance dates visit the FSMA Compliance Dates webpage.

Changes to the National Poultry Improvement Plan Program Standards

Adding and amending definitions of H5/H7 low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) (exposed) and H5/H7 LPAI (infected);

Clarifying and amending the testing protocol for Mycoplasma by allowing use of molecular-based examination procedures;

Removing specific agar gel immunodiffusion Avian Influenza testing procedures with directions to use the current National Veterinary Services Laboratories protocol;

Amending and clarifying salmonella isolation procedures;

Updating and clarifying bacteriological examination procedures for cull chicks and poults for salmonella;

Adding a new salmonella diagnostic test kit;

to establish a tolerable daily intake.

Aflatoxins were previously evaluated by EFSA's CONTAM panel in 2007. In 2009, the panel issued a statement on the effects for public health of an increase in aflatoxin total for tree nuts other than almonds, hazelnuts and pistachios and in 2012, EFSA published a technical report on impact on dietary exposure of a rise of aflatoxin total for dried figs.

In 2018, a statement from the panel covered the effect of a possible increase of the maximum level for aflatoxin total in peanuts and such processed products, intended for direct consumption or use as an ingredient in foodstuffs.

Basis of health risk finding

Maximum levels exist for aflatoxin B₁ and the sum of aflatoxin B₁, B₂, G₁ and G₂ in tree nuts, apricot kernels, ground nuts (peanuts) and other oilseeds, dried fruits, cereals, and some species of spices as well as their processed products.

For aflatoxin B₁, maximum levels are set for baby food and processed cereal-based food for infants and young children and in dietary foods for special medical purposes intended for infants. In ruminants fed contaminated feed, aflatoxin B₁ is metabolized to M₁ and rates are set for M₁ in raw milk, heat-treated milk and milk used in milk-based products, infant and follow-on formula for children and in dietary foods for special medical purposes intended for infants.

Based on studies in animals, the panel selected a benchmark dose lower confidence limit for an extra cancer risk of 10 percent of 0.4 µg/kg body weight per day for the incidence of hepatocellular carcinoma to be used in a margin of exposure approach for risk characterization. For human data, cancer potency estimates reported by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additive

(JECFA) were used.

The CONTAM panel noted calculated margin of exposure values were below 10,000 for some surveys, particularly the younger age groups, which raises a health concern, albeit the high exposure to aflatoxin M₁ from milk and dairy products may be limited to a short period in life. Calculated margin of exposure values were also below 10,000 for aflatoxin B₁.

In 2005, the EFSA Scientific Committee said that for genotoxic and carcinogenic substances that a margin of exposure of 10,000 or higher would be of low concern for public health.

The panel delivered a range of conclusions including that most data was on aflatoxin B₁ and information on other aflatoxins is scarce, studies covered in the opinion add to the weight of evidence that aflatoxin B₁ is genotoxic and child health is an emerging area for aflatoxin-related hazard identification.

Deadline for submitting comments is Nov. 15, 2019.

Chance of negative food standards impact from Brexit rises

The likelihood of a negative impact on food standards from Brexit has increased, according to a report from Public Health Wales.

The document looks at evidence since January about the possible real-life effects Brexit could have on people's health and well-being in Wales. The United Kingdom held a referendum on June 2016 and voted to leave the European Union, a move that became known as Brexit.

It found the odds of some negative impacts, such as those relating to food standards or environmental regulations, have increased from possible to probable. This change has been mostly due to evidence of a potential negative

impact on food standards in published United States trade objectives.

Kath Dalmeny, CEO of Sustain, has previously said research has shown the U.K. public will not exchange their food standards for a trade deal with the U.S.

“U.K. consumers know now that chlorine washes, hormone injections and overuse of antibiotics are used to mask poor hygiene and low animal welfare standards. We want a race to the top on food standards after Brexit, and will continue to press the government to protect our food and farmers’ livelihoods.”

Increase for potential negative outcomes

In the Public Health Wales report, the likelihood of a major negative impact on the food supply has also increased from possible to probable. This was because of the increased chance of a no-deal Brexit leading to a possibly disrupted food supply in the short term.



The prospect of negative impacts on the food safety system is listed as probable and possible for food safety regulation. Both of these did not change in the latest report.

Professor Mark Bellis, Director of Policy and

International Health at Public Health Wales, said it’s easy to forget that Brexit is an issue that is already impacting many people in the country.

“That is why Public Health Wales has now conducted two assessments of how Brexit may affect the health and well-being of people living in Wales. Our latest assessment shows little evidence of change in the likelihood of positive impacts since our last analysis in January. On the other hand, we have seen the likelihood of other potentially negative outcomes increase.”

The original report had nine potential actions suggested for Welsh public bodies, organizations, and agencies. The latest analysis recommends action in additional areas, including further research to understand the impact of Brexit as it occurs and how any effects can be mitigated for the future.

Liz Green, program director for Health Impact Assessment at Public Health Wales, said the likelihood of negatives outcomes has increased.

“With our previous analysis in January, we highlighted the need for action to maximize any potential opportunities for improving health and well-being in Wales following Brexit, as well as mitigating or preventing any possible negative impacts or unintended consequences. This new analysis indicates little evidence of change in the likelihood of positive impacts, while the likelihood of other potentially negative outcomes has increased.”

The review’s findings suggest that while Brexit will affect the whole general population, there could be vulnerable groups who may be particularly affected. For example, elderly people and those who have chronic conditions or disabilities, who require access to medication and health and social care services, and who may also be on a low income.

Brexit agreement reaction

An agreement on Brexit was reached this week between the U.K. and the European Union but Members of Parliament in the U.K. must vote on it this

Saturday (October 19).

Copa and Cogeca, CELCAA and FoodDrinkEurope said the deal paves the way for an orderly withdrawal which provides predictability to operators in the EU agri-food chain.

They also endorsed the revised political declaration on the ambition to conclude a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with zero tariffs and quantitative restrictions between the two parties. In 2017, EU27 agri-food exports to the U.K. amounted to €41 billion (\$45.7 billion) while U.K. exports to the EU reached €17 billion (\$19 billion).

The three organizations called for the ratification of the deal by the EU and the U.K. before October 31, the date the U.K. is scheduled to leave. They said everything must be done to prevent the U.K. from leaving without an agreement.

National Farmers Union president Minette Batters said it was important to remember that if the deal is agreed by U.K. and EU parliaments that it only determines how the U.K. withdraws from the EU and does not cover long-term future of the relationship.

“It is vital that the government has a long-term aspiration to ensure that British farming standards are not undercut by an ambition to open up British markets to food which would be illegal to produce here and that there is free and frictionless trade with the EU in the long term.”

Ian Wright, chief executive of the Food and Drink Federation, said it is critical that the threat of a no-deal Brexit on October 31 is lifted.

“In our view, when compared with the deal secured by Theresa May, this deal

represents a backward step in terms of securing frictionless trade with the EU. It also sets us on course for regulatory divergence from our largest overseas market on critical food safety, science, and quality issues – areas where we are world-leading.”

South Africa boosts processed meat rules to avoid Listeria repeat



South Africa has tightened regulations for processed meat products to try to avoid a repeat of the listeriosis outbreak in 2017 and 2018. A total of 1,060 cases were confirmed and 216 people died.

The largest ever reported outbreak of listeriosis included an alert in mid-June 2017, a peak in mid-November 2017, and identification of the outbreak source in mid-February 2018. It was traced to a ready-to-eat (RTE) processed meat product, called polony, made at a plant in Polokwane run by Enterprise Foods, which is owned by the multi-national corporation Tiger Brands.

Program of inspections

The new regulations follow an agreement between the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and Department of Health (DoH) on final publication of the rules for processed meat products. The rules, which are intended to enable inspection of processing plants, will be enforced by the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS), a body that reports to the DTI.

It applies to the handling, preparation, processing, packaging, refrigeration, freezing, chilling, labeling, marking and storage of heat treated and RTE processed meat products and includes microbiological and food safety related requirements of these items.

The NRCS is setting up a regulatory program of inspections throughout the country to enable government and industry to detect any food safety issues early.

Canned meats, raw boerewors, species or mixed species sausages, poultry meat and red meat including cattle, sheep, goat and pig that are untreated or treated so the product still looks like a normal raw carcass, cut, portion or pieces whether fresh or frozen are covered by other legislation.

After a stakeholder consultation, the rules for processed meat products, was gazetted on Aug. 8 and are scheduled to go into force this month.

“This denotes an era of governance where there is effective multi-sectoral collaboration to protect our people from environmental dangers whilst at the same time protecting food and job security,” said Minister of Health, Dr. Zweli Mkhize.

Potential food safety agency

The aim is to effectively regulate categories of processed meat products that are considered high risk so the health and safety of consumers is protected. The DTI will work with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) to coordinate enforcement of the legislation as part of the Agricultural Product Standards Act.

Officials from DTI, DoH and DALRRD will also consider creating a dedicated food safety authority for South Africa.

Minister of Trade and Industry, Ebrahim Patel, said it was an important step to ensure consumers are protected against harmful foodborne bacteria.

“Our food industry is important to the country’s economic development and job creation. Jobs in the food industry must be secured through measures that provide consumers with appropriate protection. We have agreed that a task team comprising of officials from the three departments (dti, DoH and DALRRD) be nominated to consider a dedicated food safety authority for the country.”

Incoming EU health chief sets out priorities

The incoming European health commissioner has set out her priorities including food safety, fraud and antimicrobial resistance.

Stella Kyriakides, candidate for the health post, was questioned by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) this past week.

Kyriakides, from Cyprus, said priorities include the new farm to fork strategy to improve food safety and action against antimicrobial resistance.

During an opening speech, she said changes faced by European societies can only be dealt with through a one health approach.

“European citizens expect the peace of mind that comes with access to health care, safe food to eat and protection against epidemics and diseases. We have some of the world’s highest standards on animal and plant health and the most affordable, accessible and high quality health systems to deliver on these expectations,” she said.

“We need to clamp down on issues such as food fraud that undermine the single market and the trust of our citizens. I want to ensure that we have the right means to keep our citizens healthy.”

MEPs also questioned the Commissioner-designate on issues such as the European Commission repeatedly approving GMO imports and how to protect consumers from food fraud.

Food fraud and safety



In answers to a European Parliament questionnaire, Kyriakides touched on food fraud and safety.

“It is also important to increase our efforts against fraudulent

practices so I will be working with the member states to develop a strategy with concrete measures against food fraud, drawing on the work of the European Anti-Fraud Office,” she wrote.

“For chemical risks and food safety, a comprehensive body of sectorial legislation is in place to ensure that the residues of chemicals in food, such as

contaminants, pesticides residues and residues of veterinary medicinal products do not constitute a risk for European consumers. Rules concerning food safety apply to all food consumed in the EU, whether or not it is produced in the EU.”

Pascal Canfin, chair of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee (ENVI), gave the green light after the hearing to Kyriakides.

Kyriakides is a member of the Democratic Rally Party in Cyprus, which is a part of the European People’s Party in the European Parliament.

MEP Peter Liese, EPP spokesperson on health, said Kyriakides impressed with detailed knowledge and a vision for the EU’s health policy.

“I have no doubt that Stella Kyriakides will be an excellent health commissioner. She also showed great persuasiveness in topics such as telemedicine, combating antimicrobial resistances and the development of pesticides with fewer risks,” he said.

If confirmed, Kyriakides would take over in the role from Vytenis Andriukaitis on November 1.

Agriculture candidate

The Agriculture and Rural Development Committee (AGRI) also questioned the candidate for the agriculture portfolio, Janusz Wojciechowski, this past week.

In introductory remarks, Wojciechowski said the EU needs a long-term vision for European agriculture.

He called for further support for EU farmers, better environmental protection and for animal-welfare standards to be improved.

MEPs questioned the Commissioner-designate on ways to ensure EU farmers

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and consumers are better protected in free-trade talks, specifically the ongoing EU-Mercosur negotiations, and asked how foreign countries' protectionist measures should be handled.

They also discussed strengthening farmers' position in the food supply chain, and measures to tackle antimicrobial resistance.

The hearing was chaired by Norbert Lins and members from the associated ENVI committee also participated.

At a meeting on Sept. 25, AGRI members held an exchange of views with DG SANTE representatives on follow-up actions after the tainted meat scandal in Brazil, known as operation "Carne Fraca" in March 2017.

The scandal concerned rotten beef from Brazil being fraudulently imported to the EU by several certified Brazilian slaughterhouses. During an audit by the Commission in May 2017, Brazil provided an action plan on how it intended to address recommendations made in the audit report.

Safety Alerts

Date	Brand Name(s)	Product Description	Product Type	Recall Reason Description	Company Name
10/23/2019	Parivar	Dry Dates	Food & Beverages, Fruit/Fruit Product	High Sulfite Content	Dilips Ceramics Inc dba Shivam Distributors
10/23/20	SWAN and	DRY	Food &	Undeclared	Peekay

19	KESHAV	APRICOTS	Beverages,	Sulfites	International Inc.
10/16/2019	Keshav	Dry Apricot	Food & Beverages, Fruit/Fruit Product	Sulfites	Peekay International Inc.
10/15/2019	Mical Seafood	Yellowfin Tuna loins, poke, steaks, ground meat and saku	Food & Beverages, Fish	Elevated levels of histamine	Mical Seafood, Inc.
10/14/2019	Samurai	Furikake Popcorn	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared fish	Samurai, Inc.
10/10/2019	Arla	Apetina Marinated Feta & Olives in Oil, Pitted	Food & Beverages, Fruit/Fruit Product	Potential to be contaminated with Clostridium botulinum	UNFI
10/10/2019	Schwan's	Garlic Herb Shrimp	Food & Beverages, Shellfish	Undeclared milk and soy	Fisherman's Pride Processors Inc
10/10/2019	Carolyn's Cookie Company, Country Baking Co.	Frozen and refrigerated cookie dough products	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared peanuts and walnuts	California New Foods
10/09/2	Blue Bell	Butter	Food &	Foreign object	Blue Bell

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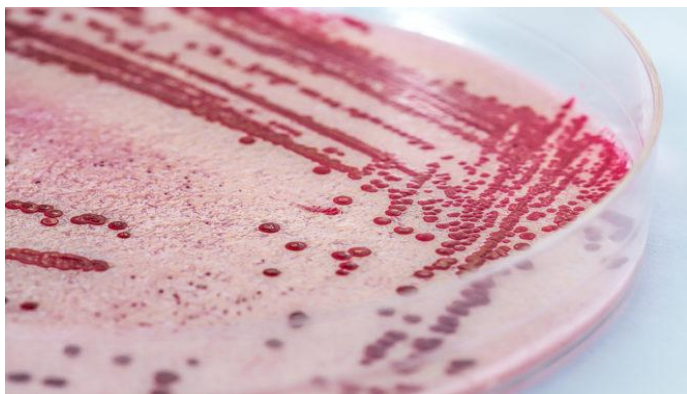
019		Crunch Ice Cream	Beverages, Ice Cream/Frozen Dairy		Ice Cream	19	Arthur Flour	d All-Purpose Flour	Beverages, Bakery Product/Mix		Arthur Flour, Inc.
10/09/2019	Whole Foods Market	White Parkerhouse Rolls	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared milk and egg	Whole Foods Market	10/03/2019	Ample Hills Creamery	Peppermint Pattie Ice Cream	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared peanut	Ample Hills Manufacturing
10/09/2019	Tuscan Sun	Chicken salad sandwiches	Food & Beverages,	Potential contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	Jumbo Foods Inc.	10/02/2019	Distributed by: Super World Trading Inc.	Dried Date	Food & Beverages,	Sulfites	Super World Trading Inc.
10/08/2019	Premo and Fresh Grab	Ham and cheese wedge sandwiches	Food & Beverages, Prepared Food	Potential contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	Lipari Foods	10/02/2019	CAPITAN K	Salmon slightly salted piece	Food & Beverages,	Listeria monocytogenes	Euphoria Fancy Food Inc.
10/04/2019	Cornerstone	Frozen Blackberries	Food & Beverages, Fruit/Fruit Product	Norovirus	Cornerstone Premium Foods	10/02/2019	Lipari Old Tyme, Premo, Fresh Grab, Premo Signature	Chicken Salad and Chicken Salad Sandwiches	Food & Beverages, Prepared Food	Potential contamination of Listeria monocytogenes	Lipari Foods
10/04/2019	Lunch Box; Fresh and Local	Chicken salad sandwiches	Food & Beverages, Prepared Food	Potential contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	Grand Strand Sandwich Companies	10/02/2019	Mical Seafood	Yellowfin Tuna	Food & Beverages, Fish	Elevated levels of histamine	Mical Seafood, Inc.
10/04/2019	Robin Hood Flour	All-Purpose Flour	Food & Beverages, Bakery Product/Mix	E. coli O26	The J. M. Smucker Company	10/02/2019	Coborn's	Chicken containing products including	Food & Beverages, Prepared Food	Potential contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	Coborn's, Inc.
10/03/20	King	Unbleached	Food &	E. coli O26	King						

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		sandwiches, pastas, salads, spread		es			Farms	and Experience Cheeses		es	Farms
10/02/2019	Deli Express, Market Sandwich, Market Artisan, more	Sandwiches	Food & Beverages, Prepared Food	Potential contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	E.A. Sween Company	09/30/2019	Cellect®, Essentials Factor®	Multi Mineral & Vitamin Supplement Unflavored Powder Mix	Food & Beverages,	Unsafe levels of Arsenic and Lead	Cellect Products Inc. and Oglethorpe Ltd.
10/02/2019	Mrs. Stratton's, Star, Ballard's Farm, Laura Lynn, more	Chicken and tuna salad products	Food & Beverages,	Potential contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	Mrs. Stratton's	09/30/2019	Whole Foods Market	Dorset cheese	Food & Beverages,	Potential contamination of Listeria monocytogenes	Whole Foods Market
10/01/2019	SuperMom's, Hometown Kitchen	Chicken Salad Sandwiches	Food & Beverages,	Potential contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	Northern Tier Bakery LLC	09/26/2019	RONG SHING NY Trading Inc.	GANCHI NAIWEITANGPIAN candy	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared milk	RONG SHING NY Trading Inc.
10/01/2019	Glam Day	Nougat candy	Food & Beverages, Candy/Gum (without chocolate)	Undeclared milk and egg	RONG SHING NY Trading Inc.	09/25/2019	Trail's End	Trail's End Chocolatey Caramel Crunch	Food & Beverages, Snack Food Item	Contain almonds, cashews and pecans	Weaver Fundraising, LLC
09/30/2019	Consider Bardwell	Dorset, Slyboboro	Food & Beverages,	Listeria monocytogen	Consider Bardwell	09/24/2019	Captain K	Salmon slightly salted pieces	Food & Beverages, Fish	Due to possible contamination with Listeria monocytogenes	Euphoria Fancy Food Inc

Enterprise News

Listeria scare in U.S. and Canada over ready-to-eat chicken



Tip Top Poultry, Inc., located in Rockmart, GA, has recalled an undetermined amount of ready-to-eat (RTE) poultry products that may be adulterated with *Listeria monocytogenes*,

according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The frozen cooked, diced or shredded, RTE chicken products were produced between January 21, 2019, and September 24, 2019. The products subject to recall bear establishment number "Est. P-17453" inside the USDA mark of inspection and were shipped to institutions throughout both the United States and Canada

Consumers in the United States have only been provided with this spreadsheet to identify the recalled products. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA's) list of recalled products distributed in Canada is also available.

FSIS learned Tip Top's production was confirmed positive for the presence of *Listeria monocytogenes* after being tested in Canada.

The firm first recalled all cooked, diced or shredded, RTE chicken products produced from January 21, 2019, through September 24, 2019, with product codes ranging from 10000 to 19999 and 70000 to 79999.

Tip Top next expanded the dates and the scope of the recall says it was "out of an abundance of caution."

There have not yet been any confirmed reports of adverse reactions due to consumption of these products. Anyone concerned about an injury or illness should contact a healthcare provider.

Consumption of food contaminated with *L. monocytogenes* can cause listeriosis, a serious infection that primarily affects older adults, persons with weakened immune systems, and pregnant women and their newborns. Less commonly, persons outside these risk groups are also infected.

Listeriosis can cause fever, muscle aches, headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance and convulsions sometimes preceded by diarrhea or other gastrointestinal symptoms. An invasive infection spreads beyond the gastrointestinal tract. In pregnant women, the infection can cause miscarriages, stillbirths, premature delivery or life-threatening infection of the newborn. In addition, serious and sometimes fatal infections in older adults and persons with weakened immune systems. Listeriosis is treated with antibiotics. Persons in the higher-risk categories who experience flu-like symptoms within two months after eating contaminated food should seek medical care and tell the health care provider about eating the contaminated food.

FSIS is concerned that some product may be in institutional freezers. Institutions that have purchased these products are urged not to serve them. These products should be thrown away or returned to the place of purchase.

FSIS routinely conducts recall effectiveness checks to verify recalling firms notify their customers of the recall and that steps are taken to make certain that the product is no longer available to consumers. When available, a retail distribution list(s), if applicable, will be posted on the FSIS website.

Coalition called “The Baby Food Council” says it will take on heavy metals

A coalition of companies and others formed last January announced Thursday it was taking on “the challenge of reducing heavy metals in young children’s food.

With the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as “technical advisors to the effort,” The Baby Food Council, organized in January by Cornell University and the Environmental Defense Fund, includes infant and toddler food companies among its key stakeholders.

The organization’s goal is to “reduce heavy metals in the companies’ products to as low as reasonably achievable using best-in-class management practices.”

The Baby Food Council brings together parties that might ordinarily oppose one another in the interest of achieving common goals instead. It is open to all companies that source ingredients, manage the upstream supply chain, and nationally market foods for children six to 24 months of age in the United States.

Over 150 baby and toddler foods recently tested contained detectable levels of heavy metals. The children’s health advocacy group, Healthy Babies Bright Futures (HBBF), sponsored the study.

“The latest federal data from FDA on lead in food shows that the percent of samples with detectable levels remain stubbornly high for certain foods such as

carrots, sweet potatoes, and teething biscuits,” said Tom Neltner, Chemicals Policy Director at Environmental Defense Fund. “The HBBF report reinforces the need to better understand the best practices to sustainably reduce heavy metals not just in baby food but all food. We are pleased to be a member of the Council to work towards that goal and solve this important challenge.”

The Council statement said it was “recognizing that heavy metals are widely present in the environment and can get into food,” and its new target would be “to reduce levels of heavy metals in food products to as low as reasonably achievable using best-in-class management techniques.”

It said the HBBF report highlights the challenges and reinforces the need for more action to address the problem. “The report documented detectable amounts of lead, cadmium, and inorganic arsenic in commercial baby foods as well as other foods commonly consumed by young children,” it said.

The HBBF study itself said parents “cannot shop their way out of these exposures” by switching to organic foods or going with store brand purees. The metals are just too common across the marketplace.

The report did recommend actions to help address the issue of heavy metals in foods, including some suggestions for government and food manufacturers. Importantly, it also



offered simple steps for parents to help minimize exposure as the Council's efforts to lower levels continue.

In addition to leading food companies, the Council includes academic, government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as partners and advisors. Beech-Nut Nutrition Company, Campbell Soup Company (Plum Organics), Gerber Products Company, The Hain Celestial Group (Earth's Best), Happy Family Organics, and HBBF are also Council members.

“Although heavy metals are naturally occurring in the environment, we are always looking to reduce their presence in food. Earth's Best is excited to partner with the members of the Baby Food Council to support this important initiative,” said Raul Fajardo, Senior Vice President Technical Services, The Hain Celestial Group.

Early efforts of the Council focused on identifying those foods and ingredients with the most potential to contribute to heavy metal exposure in young children.

From here, it will be working to determine best practices that can reduce heavy metal levels in these foods. This work will initially focus on the environment, understanding that heavy metals are widely present in soil and water and may become part of foods as they grow.

More beef recalled for E. coli risk; this time it's Whole Foods Market

Whole Foods Market brand beef products are the subject of the 14th E. coli related recall of such products since Oct. 3.

The recall posted Oct. 19 by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency lists numerous beef and veal products, as have the previous recalls. Several have specifically

named Ryding-Regency Meat Packers Ltd. as a source of the implicated beef.

A number of grocery chain brands are included in the recalls. In yesterday's recall of Whole Foods Market brand products, the CFIA urged consumers distributors, retailers and foodservice establishments such as hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, hospitals, and nursing homes to avoid using or selling the recalled products.

In the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has issued a public health alert for raw non-intact beef products derived from imported beef from Ontario, Canada, that has been recalled by Ryding-Regency Meat Packers Ltd. because of possible E. coli O157: H7 contamination.

Ryding-Regency recalled beef products in Canada on Oct. 3. A number of related recalls have been issued.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is conducting a food safety investigation and has determined that certain products produced by the company may contain O157: H7. While Canada is the recalling authority, FSIS is amplifying the recall through its public health alert.

The CFIA notified FSIS that several shipments of beef implicated in a series of recalls have been exported to the U.S.

Lead, arsenic contamination found in drink mixes; international recall underway

A New York company is recalling powdered drink mixes from U.S. retailers nationwide and consumers worldwide because of unsafe levels of arsenic and lead.

The company, “Collect Products Inc. and Oglethorpe Ltd.,” posted a recall notice with the Food and Drug Administration today urging consumers and others to check for the implicated products. Collect Products Inc. and Oglethorpe Ltd. is notifying its distributors and customers by email or mail, according to the recall notice.

“The Collect Unflavored Powder & Essentials Factor Cell Synergy Unflavored Powder has been found to have unsafe levels of Arsenic and Lead,” the notice states.

“Consumers, distributors and retailers that have Collect Unflavored Powder or Essentials Factor Cell Synergy Unflavored Powder which is being recalled should stop using and return to place of purchase for a replacement or a refund.”

The recalled Collect Unflavored Powder and/or Essentials Factor Cell Synergy Unflavored Powder are packaged in 1.25-pound white plastic bottles. To determine whether they have the recalled products, consumers and others

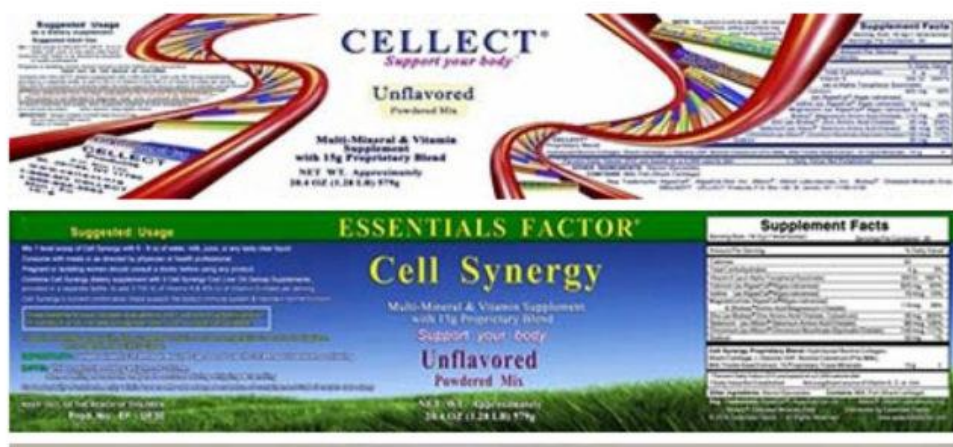
should look at the bottom of each bottle for lot 041907 and a manufactured (MFG) date of 05/20/2019. The products are labeled as a “Multi-Mineral & Vitamin Supplement.”

Consumers in the United States had access to the drink mixes online and at retail stores. Internationally, the company used the internet to sell the products in Canada, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Croatia, Romania, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, China, India, Thailand and Japan.

In the recall, company officials said consumption of the recalled products could result in an accumulation of lead in the body over time “and too much of it can cause serious and sometimes permanent adverse health consequences.” The recall also states that “long-term exposure to inorganic arsenic has been associated with skin disorders and increased risks for skin, bladder, and lung cancers.”

People with high blood levels of lead may show no symptoms, but the condition may cause damage to the nervous system and internal organs, according to the recall notice. Acute lead poisoning may cause a wide range of symptoms, including abdominal pain, muscle weakness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss, and bloody or decreased urinary output.

Children are particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning. Lead poisoning can be diagnosed through clinical testing. As of the posting of the recall notice today, Collect Products Inc. and Oglethorpe Ltd. had not received any reports of adverse events related to this recall.



Researchers aim to improve *Clostridium perfringens* surveillance

Whole genome sequencing can improve surveillance and control of *Clostridium perfringens*, say researchers.

Clostridium perfringens bacteria are responsible for an estimated 80,000 cases of diarrhea in the United Kingdom each year either from food poisoning or a non-foodborne origin. It is the second most common foodborne pathogen after *Campylobacter* with cases often under reported because of mild illness.

For many people, symptoms are unpleasant but normally only last up to 24 hours. For vulnerable groups such as the elderly living in care homes, a longer-lasting debilitating chronic infection may occur that can be fatal. Enterotoxigenic *Clostridium perfringens* is estimated to cause 55 deaths per year in England and Wales.

Analysis of historical outbreaks

Researchers at the Quadram Institute worked with Public Health England (PHE) to analyze *Clostridium perfringens* foodborne and non-foodborne outbreaks over seven years in England and Wales. With the University of Cambridge, the team used whole genome sequencing (WGS) to analyze bacterial strains associated with causing gastroenteritis.

WGS has more discriminatory power in profiling outbreak strains, when compared to the PHE laboratory technique of fluorescent amplified fragment length polymorphism analysis.

A total of 109 samples of *Clostridium perfringens* isolated from disease cases or foods suspected of causing infections in England and Wales between 2011 and 2017 had their whole genome sequenced, according to the research published in

the journal *Microbial Genomics*.

This allowed analysis of the genes responsible for toxin production, as well as characteristics that aid infection, such as antimicrobial resistance. Comparative analysis of the different genomes allowed researchers to see how related different strains are, which helps trace where they may have come from.

The team found nine outbreaks associated with care homes in North East England over a period of five years were caused by closely related strains of *Clostridium perfringens*. This indicates a potential common source, although what this was could not be pinpointed.



WGS for routine surveillance

Dr. Lindsay Hall, from the Quadram Institute, said the study shows how

cutting-edge approaches can be used profile and track important bacteria associated with food poisoning.

“We hope to use the information generated to identify potential strains of *Clostridium perfringens* that may be associated with outbreaks so that we can in the future develop intervention strategies to try and prevent spread.”

Using WGS for routine surveillance could be crucial in preventing future outbreaks and to rapidly pinpoint sources of contamination. Wider surveillance could provide data from diverse sources to help researchers understand more about the bacteria, how they survive and why they cause disease.

The study showed the genes that encode the key toxin responsible for causing gastroenteritis aren't limited to the bacterial chromosome but may also be carried on virulence plasmids that can be transferred around bacteria.

Human cases of *Clostridium perfringens* diarrhea are primarily caused by type F strains (formerly classed as enterotoxigenic type A), which produce enterotoxin (CPE), encoded by the *cpe* gene.

More data will help understand how the virulence factors are spread and identify reservoirs of persistent bacteria. This will improve intervention strategies and ways of preventing outbreaks and infections to protect vulnerable communities.

Researchers received funding from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Wellcome Trust and Food Standards Agency.

Typical symptoms which occur within eight to 14 hours after ingestion of contaminated food include intestinal cramps and watery diarrhea without fever or vomiting, and normally last 12 to 24 hours.

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