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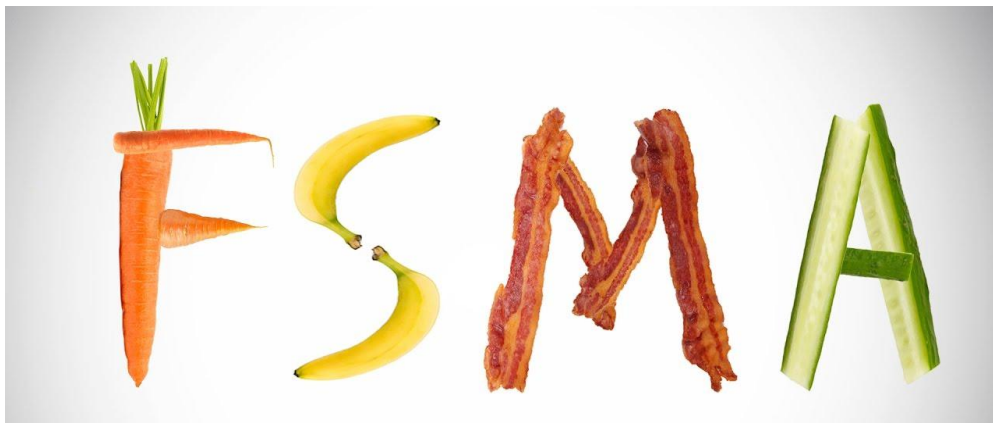


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International News

FDA to resume Produce Safety Rule inspections in 2021



The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will resume Produce Safety Rule inspections under the Food Safety Modernization Act in Oregon. This means that Oregon operations may receive a phone call from the FDA requesting to schedule an inspection as early this month.

In 2019, inspections started nationwide on the largest US produce farms as well as large foreign farms that export to the US. Inspections were put on hold in 2020 due to COVID-19. All farm sizes are subject to routine inspections in 2021. However, large farms not inspected in 2019 will be prioritized over small and very small farms.

For those that need help preparing for an inspection; On-Farm Readiness Reviews (OFRRs) are free and voluntary. These educational, confidential visits help farmers identify an operation's strengths and weaknesses relative to the

FSMA Produce Safety Rule.

Reviewers are well-versed in the Produce Safety Rule and will only cover the portions of the rule that apply to the operation. During COVID-19 these visits can be done remotely.

State monitoring confirms low or no pesticide residues in most fruits and vegetables

A newly released Department of Pesticide Regulation report should ease concerns of California consumers unsure about pesticide residues in fresh fruits and vegetables.

The 2019 California Pesticide Residue Monitoring Program Report shows that 96 percent of fresh-produce samples collected by DPR scientists in 2019 had either no detectable pesticide residues, or amounts below safety thresholds ("tolerances") established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"This program is a vitally important tool for helping to ensure the safety of California's food supply of fresh fruits and vegetables, whether imported from other countries or grown in our state," said DPR Director Val Dolcini. "It's useful as a deterrent to bad actors and it's also a helpful way to educate growers about what is and isn't acceptable for use in California."

The findings are based on 3,274 samples of fruits and vegetables gathered throughout the year by DPR at nearly 500 different stores, distribution centers and outdoor markets statewide. Samples are analyzed at California Department of Food and Agriculture labs, which test for nearly 500 different types of pesticides and pesticide-breakdown products.

In all, 137 samples (4 percent) contained illegal residues, meaning they contained

products prohibited from being used on certain crops, or had levels of otherwise allowable pesticides that exceeded EPA tolerances. The highest number of violations involved imported dragon fruit (25), followed by chayote fruit (9), and tomatillos (9).

When illegal residues are detected, DPR traces the suspect crop through its lines of trade – from store shelves, to shippers, to importers or growers. Tainted products are quarantined and subject to destruction. In addition to potentially losing their shipments, growers and distributors found in violation can face fines and other penalties

For example, in 2019, DPR imposed \$175,435 in civil penalties on a Vernon, Calif., produce distributor, Marquez Produce, Inc., for several violations involving importation and sales of produce with illegal pesticide residues. Read more about the settlement agreement [here](#).

In another case, DPR fined two California strawberry growers whose crops contained illegal traces of the pesticide methomyl, which is not registered for use on strawberries. DPR discovered the berries during sampling at a Fresno grocery store. In addition to the fine, DPR ordered the destruction of four tons of tainted berries that could have otherwise been sold to consumers. The Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner also ordered the growers to cease harvest on 11 acres of berries in the field. More information can be found [here](#).

As part of enforcement activities, DPR staff also conduct compliance interviews with businesses found in violation – typically importers or growers – to discuss ways their business can prevent future sales of illegal produce.

FDA releases results of FY20-FY21 romaine lettuce sampling assignment



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is releasing the findings of a sampling assignment that tested raw agricultural commodity romaine lettuce mostly at facilities and on farms in the Salinas, California, and Yuma, Arizona, growing regions for the presence of pathogens that have been linked to outbreaks of foodborne illness.

The assignment to detect pathogenic *Escherichia coli* (specifically, Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* or STEC) and *Salmonella* spp. began in November 2019 and ended in December 2020, after a pause in sample collection and testing from March through October 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The FDA did not detect any pathogens during the assignment.

The agency prioritized sample collection at farms and FDA-registered facilities

identified in traceback investigations as suppliers of romaine lettuce possibly linked or linked to outbreaks of foodborne illnesses from 2017 to 2019. The FDA collected and tested 279 samples for both pathogens. Each sample was made up of 10 subsamples, with each subsample consisting of one or more heads or hearts of romaine lettuce and weighing at least 300 grams.

This approach – the collection and testing of samples composed of multiple subsamples – increases the probability of detecting pathogens if present, given that microbial hazards may not be uniformly present. Agency field staff collected all samples in their natural form but for the outer leaves having been removed. No fresh-cut lettuce was collected.

Ensuring the microbiological safety of leafy greens continues to be a priority to the FDA. Although no pathogens were detected during this assignment, maintaining surveillance during the growing/harvesting season is helpful to informing the agency's leafy greens prevention efforts, specifically those outlined in the FDA's Leafy Greens Action Plan. The FDA originally released the action plan in March 2020 to foster a more urgent and collaborative approach to preventing leafy greens outbreaks caused by STEC. In April 2021, the FDA released an updated version of the plan which reaffirms our commitment to advancing leafy greens safety.

FDA Amends Standard of Identity for Yogurt

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is issuing a final rule to amend and modernize the standard of identity for yogurt by allowing for greater flexibilities and technological advances in yogurt production.

This initiative is part of the FDA's Nutrition Innovation Strategy. Standards of identity set requirements related to the content and production of certain food

products. One of the goals of the Nutrition Innovation Strategy is to modernize food standards to maintain the basic nature and nutritional integrity of products while allowing industry flexibility for innovation to produce more healthful foods. The FDA began establishing standards of identity around 1938 to promote honesty and fair dealing in the interest of consumers and since this time has established more than 280 standards for a wide variety of food products.

Currently, the FDA has separate standards of identity for yogurt, lowfat yogurt, and nonfat yogurt. Under the final rule, lowfat yogurt and nonfat yogurt will be covered under FDA's general definition and standard of identity, which allows nutritionally modified versions of traditional standardized foods.

The final rule expands the allowable ingredients in yogurt, including sweeteners such as agave, and reconstituted forms of basic dairy ingredients. It establishes a minimum amount of live and active cultures yogurt must contain to bear the optional labeling statement "contains live and active cultures" or similar statement. For yogurt treated to inactivate viable microorganisms, the statement "does not contain live and active cultures" is required on the label. Additionally, the final rule supports the many innovations that have already been made in the yogurt marketplace, including continuing to allow manufacturers to fortify yogurts, such as adding vitamins A and D, as long as they meet fortification requirements. The rule also allows various styles or textures of yogurt as long as they meet requirements in the standard of identity.

The action responds, in part, to a citizen petition submitted by the National Yogurt Association, which is now part of the International Dairy Foods Association. The FDA issued a proposed rule on January 15, 2009.

The compliance date of this final rule is January 1, 2024, which is the uniform

compliance date for final food labeling regulations issued in 2021 and 2022.

Cadmium in chocolate limits put forward in Codex meeting



A Codex committee has recommended new maximum levels (MLs) for cadmium in chocolate.

The levels set for cadmium are 0.3 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) for chocolate containing up to 30 percent cocoa total solids and 0.7mg/kg for the 30 percent to 50 percent category.

The European Union, Norway and Egypt did not agree with the 0.3 mg/kg levels put forward and these three nations plus Switzerland didn't back the 0.7mg/kg levels.

Instead of 0.3 mg/kg the three countries wanted a level of 0.1 mg/kg. In the other category, a lower ML of 0.3 mg/kg was proposed as protecting consumers,

especially children. Supporters of the set levels said they would protect public health while promoting trade and discussions had been ongoing since 2013.

Stricter EU rules

The EU's maximum permitted cadmium levels are 0.1 mg/kg for milk chocolate with less than 30 percent cocoa total solids and 0.3 mg/kg for chocolate in the 30 percent to 50 percent bracket. Colombia; Côte d'Ivoire; Ecuador; Madagascar and Peru first raised concerns about these limits in 2017 at a World Trade Organization meeting.

A Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) exposure assessment of cadmium in all food sources found the heavy metal in cocoa is not a significant source of exposure in the human diet globally. However, for children from mainly European countries that eat only cocoa sources from South America, these products do pose a more significant source of exposure to cadmium.

The decision on maximum levels for cocoa powder containing 100 percent total cocoa solids was delayed for a year to get more data. Work is continuing on a code of practice for the prevention and reduction of cadmium in cocoa beans.

The Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food proposals will be discussed at the Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting in November this year.

“The Codex adoption of maximum levels for cadmium in chocolate products is a positive step forward for common global standards, based on expert scientific risk assessment and global data from producing regions. A single standard means simplicity for global compliance, enabling international trade. Moreover, basing standards on global data helps avoid unnecessary food waste,” said Martin Slayne, from the International Confectionery Association, a Codex

observer.

Methylmercury and lead-related discussion

Participants at the virtual meeting supported establishment of maximum lead limits for dried spices and culinary herbs but discussions were postponed for a year to allow for more data. Work on limits for eggs, cereal-based food for infants and ready-to-eat meals is also ongoing.

The committee agreed not to set a maximum limit for lead in herbal teas for infants and young children, yogurt, cheese and milk-based products. It also backed a revised code of practice to reduce lead in foods for adoption at the November Codex meeting.

Lauren Robin, from the U.S. delegation, said the code of practice was an important accomplishment.

“The code will help governments and industry follow best practices and supports work on lead MLs. It includes new information on topics like filtration aids for beverages and keeping farms safe from lead,” she said.

There was agreement to start new work on maximum levels for methylmercury in orange roughy and pink cusk eel. Further data was needed on Patagonian toothfish while experts are also looking at developing guidance to manage methylmercury in fish.

Mycotoxin and other issues

Discussions from 400 delegates continued on maximum levels for total aflatoxins in cereals and cereal-based products including foods for infants and young children. Proposals on limits for total aflatoxins in ready-to-eat peanuts will be considered by the committee in 2022.

Work on a code of practice to prevent and reduce mycotoxin contamination in cassava and cassava-based products will start if approved by the Codex meeting in November. Discussions on creating limits for Hydrocyanic cyanide in cassava and cassava-based products were halted until more data is available.

Other areas mentioned during the five-day meeting included a discussion paper on pyrrolizidine alkaloids, possible follow-up work on ciguatera poisoning and tropane alkaloids, and seeking advice from the Codex Alimentarius Commission on how to address the safety of edible insects.

Steve Wearne, vice chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, said the lack of adequate food safety control causes millions of foodborne illnesses and thousands of deaths per year.

“Although attention is often captured by acute illness caused by foodborne pathogens, the often chronic illness caused by contaminants in food is no less real. It remains vital that we focus on the development and dissemination of Codex standards which ensure the safety and quality of food for everyone, everywhere,” he said.

Three sentenced in Belgium as part of fipronil egg scandal

Three people in Belgium have been sentenced for their roles in the 2017 fipronil affair that involved hundreds of poultry farms.

Prison terms range from one year to 18 months suspended for endangering public health and damages were awarded to civil parties. Seven individuals and four firms faced the court in Antwerp.

Investigations started in 2017 after high levels of fipronil were detected in eggs in Belgium and the Netherlands. Hundreds of poultry farms had to be cleared,

with livestock and millions of eggs destroyed.



Jail time and financial penalties

Belgian and Dutch authorities identified a network of suspects selling Dega-16 which contained fipronil to combat the problem of red mites on poultry farms. To hide use of the substance, fake labels were used with traders operating without a valid license. Hundreds of poultry farmers started using the product.

Eurojust supported an action day in 2017 which saw more than 10 premises searched and nine suspects arrested for crimes including the possession of dangerous biocides.

Patrick Remijnsen, who sold Dega-16, and his partner who worked with him at a company called Agro Remijnsen, were found guilty of importing fipronil from Romania and selling the product without the necessary permits. The court heard evidence that they falsified the labeling of Dega-16 and other official documents

for the product by not stating it contained fipronil.

The former was sentenced to three years in prison, of which two were suspended, and fined €200,000 (\$243,500), which was suspended. His partner was given a suspended prison sentence of 18 months and a suspended fine of €20,000 (\$24,300). An appeal is still possible.

One of the companies that used Dega-16 was also found guilty. The court heard that the firm used the product at customers knowing that it contained a substance that was not mentioned on the label. The company's manager was handed a suspended prison sentence of 18 months and a suspended fine of €20,000.

Awarded damages

Others were acquitted as it was not proven that they were aware Dega-16 contained fipronil.

Compensation of more than €4 million (\$4.8 million) was awarded to farmers and victims for economic damage suffered after poultry was destroyed and eggs were removed from store shelves.

The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) was granted €17 million (\$20.7 million) compensation and Ovam (the Public Waste Agency of Flanders) got €1.8 million (\$2.2 million).

Eurojust assisted with investigations in 2017 and helped set up and operate a joint investigation team between Belgium and the Netherlands, to support judicial action against the suspects.

In April this year, two Dutch suspects were sentenced to one year in prison for their roles in the scandal. The managers of Chickfriend and Chickclean used

fipronil at poultry farms in the Netherlands. Between 2015 and 2017, they cleaned the sheds of about 20 percent of all poultry farmers in the Netherlands.

FDA Releases Investigation Findings Following Summer 2020 Outbreak Linked to Peaches

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has released a report on its investigation of the Salmonella Enteritidis outbreak in Peaches. The FDA and multiple state and federal partners investigated an outbreak of Salmonella Enteritidis infections that were linked to the consumption of peaches during the summer of 2020. In total, the outbreak caused 101 reported illnesses across 17 states, including 28 hospitalizations. This appears to be the first time a Salmonella outbreak has been linked to peaches.

The FDA conducted this investigation in conjunction with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state partners, and Canadian public health officials between August and October 2020. The epidemiological and traceback investigation determined that peaches packed or supplied by a large grower/producer were the likely source of the outbreak. The traceback evidence informed and helped to prioritize two subsequent investigations of peach packing/holding operations and peach orchards in Cutler, Kerman, and Sanger, California. The large grower/producer cooperated with FDA throughout the investigation and is continuing to engage with FDA on the agency's findings and recommendations.

Investigators conducted over 700 tests on environmental, peach, and peach tree leaf samples. While no test results matched the 2020 outbreak strain, four tests conducted on peach and peach tree leaf samples collected from an orchard adjacent to a poultry operation yielded positives for Salmonella Alachua which

were further linked via whole genome sequencing (WGS) to 2019 and 2020 chicken isolates. This finding prompted a follow-up investigation more closely focused on growing areas and a voluntary recall by the firm, preventing the tested, contaminated product from reaching the market. During the follow-up investigation, two tests of peach tree leaf samples collected from orchards adjacent to a cattle feedlot yielded positives for Salmonella Montevideo that were genetically similar via WGS to 2018-2020 beef and cattle isolates.

While investigators did not find the outbreak strain, and the strains of Salmonella found during this outbreak were not linked to any clinical illnesses, the investigational findings reinforce the FDA's concern about the potential impact that adjacent land uses can have on the safety of produce.

The FDA views the implementation of appropriate science- and risk-based measures to reduce the potential for contamination of peaches and other produce as the most effective and practicable means to improve the safety of fresh produce, especially when measures are tailored to the specific practices and conditions on individual farms. The FDA encourages all growers to be cognizant of and assess risks that may be posed by adjacent and nearby land uses, including for the potential impact of dust exposure. The FDA also recognizes the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment when it comes to public health outcomes, and we encourage collaboration among various groups in the broader agricultural community (e.g., produce growers, those managing animal operations, state and federal government agencies, and academia) to address this issue.

UK patient count in Salmonella melon outbreak doubles



The number of people sick in the United Kingdom in an outbreak linked to melons has almost doubled.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Public Health England (PHE) are investigating the incident with 99 people sick since April. It was previously known that 52 people were ill in the UK.

Those more than 70 and less than 9 years old are the age groups mostly affected. Investigations are focusing on the supply chain of galia, cantaloupe and honeydew melons from Honduras and Costa Rica.

FSA is working with trade associations and retail businesses to get information relevant to the outbreak. A quick rise in confirmed infections occurred in the week commencing May 24.

Initial advice from the FSA warned about consuming whole melons from Brazil but further investigations including analysis of the food chain and testing has shown that product from Brazil is unlikely to be involved.

Most UK retailers may have stocked the affected melons, which have now been removed from sale. Affected fruit was bought on or before May 28. People can identify the country of origin from a sticker on the fruit. If the fruit does not have a sticker consumers who have it in their homes should throw it away in an abundance of caution.

Other affected countries

As of late May, 11 other countries are also affected by the same outbreak strain of Salmonella Braenderup.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is supporting an international outbreak investigation and the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) has been following the multi-country outbreak since May 10.

Patients have been reported in Denmark, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Canada and Switzerland.

Figures provided by the ECDC to Food Safety News show 356 people are sick of which 267 have been confirmed.

Belgium has 51 infections with four confirmed from March. A total of 27 patients live in the Netherlands.

Germany has 75 patients of which 34 have been confirmed since March 30 and Switzerland has 15 cases with 12 confirmed between March 24 and May 7.

Denmark identified 30 people with Salmonella Braenderup infections between March 26 and May 17 and Sweden has confirmed 45 patients who became ill from early April.

Nine people are sick in Finland from mid-April and Norway has five cases between April 13 and 26 in a nursing home. Both Luxembourg and the Czech Republic have three confirmed patients.

One person is ill in Canada with symptom onset of March 8. The 53-year old male has no history of travel. Five people are affected in France and there are four patients in Ireland since March 30.

Norway links Salmonella outbreak to raw milk cheese



Six people in Norway have fallen ill in recent months with the source of infection thought to be contaminated raw milk cheese from France.

The foodborne outbreak was suspected to be caused by Salmonella Dublin in chilled cheese made with unpasteurized milk.

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Folkehelseinstituttet) investigated the outbreak with the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (Mattilsynet) and Norwegian Veterinary Institute.

Link made in patient interviews

Early this year, Norwegian officials detected a cluster of six patients with Salmonella Dublin infections. Salmonella Dublin is rare in the country with typically no more than five infections reported annually, according to health officials.

Patients lived in four different counties. Their median age was 70 and a half years old with a range from 40 to 85 and half were female. Symptom onset ranged from the end of December 2020 to beginning of March this year.

In interviews, five of six people said they may have eaten raw milk cheese from France. No microbiological analysis of cheese could be performed because there was no stock left and the product is believed to no longer be on the market.

All six patients were interviewed with a standardized questionnaire for Salmonella to get food consumption history one week before symptom onset. There was also a more targeted questionnaire with pictures of different cheeses. People were also asked where they bought the different products.

Based on results of patient interviews and traceback information, raw milk cheese from France may be the source of the outbreak, but given the small number of confirmed cases and limited information, officials were unable to determine the link conclusively.

Dried product sampling results

Meanwhile, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority has published findings of a survey on dried products in the domestic market that were analyzed for Salmonella.

The surveillance program in 2020 was done to assess the sector following a Salmonella outbreak in 2019 where 58 people became ill after eating a mixture of exotic dried fruit.

Some products were ready to eat food that are often consumed without heat treatment. Salmonella survives for a long time in dry foods and can be unevenly distributed in them.

In total, 543 samples of spices, dried berries, fruit and nut mixtures, and milk powder and dried infant formula were collected and more than 1,000 analyzes done but no Salmonella was detected.

Samples were taken randomly from across the country and at all stages of the supply chain from importers and manufacturers to retailers. Products originated from many countries including the United States, China, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Denmark, Sweden, and Turkey.

Finland sees record Listeria high in 2020

Finland reported a record number of Listeria infections this past year with the figure almost twice as high as 2019.

The 93 Listeria infections in 2020 were nearly double the 50 in the year before and the largest annual total ever reported to the National Infectious Diseases Register. Almost 80 infections were recorded in 2018 and 90 in 2017.

Nearly all bacterial infections decreased significantly in 2020 from mid-March because of measures put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to data published by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL).

The THL is responsible for the monitoring, prevention and control of infectious diseases in Finland. Physicians and laboratories report findings on infectious diseases to the National Infectious Diseases Register maintained by the agency.

Listeria infections have increased since 2009. In Finland, risky foods include dry-cured and cold-smoked fish products. In total, 58 percent of patients were more than 70 years of age and 47 were men.

Campylobacter is the most common bacterial cause of gastrointestinal infections in Finland. In 2020, 2,074 infections were reported to the register. This is just under half of what it was in 2019, but the share of infections of domestic origin was higher than previous years.

Most infections were reported in people aged 45 to 54 years old and incidence was highest in July.

“Last year, travel restrictions may have increased the share of domestic infections, but their number has already been on the rise since 2010. More information is still needed on the origin of infections so that prevention measures can be better targeted,” said Tuula Hannila-Handelberg, chief physician at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

Listeria outbreak investigations

Suspected food and waterborne outbreaks were sent to a system overseen by THL and the Finnish Food Authority (Ruokavirasto). In total, 58 notifications

were made compared to 81 in 2019. Several other infection clusters were also identified.



During 2020, 10 different listeriosis clusters were investigated. In one, 23 people fell ill from 2016 to 2020 across Finland. An investigation found an epidemiological and microbiological association between illness and a meat company. Isolates from patients were similar to strains isolated from the products of a meat establishment in 2017 and 2020. Listeria had been repeatedly detected in the plant's products and production environment in 2019 and 2020.

In another infection cluster 14 people fell sick, also from 2016 to 2020. Patient samples were similar to Listeria strains isolated from the products of another meat factory that were typed in 2020. Analysis found an epidemiological and microbiological link between the illness of three patients and this firm.

In a third outbreak, 21 people became ill from 2017 to 2020 across Finland.

Patient isolates were similar to strains found in 2020 from lettuce and salad of one company. No Listeria was found during environmental sampling of the factory.

An outbreak of *Yersinia enterocolitica* in early 2020 involved 20 people and was linked to chopped iceberg lettuce. A rare *Salmonella* Kedougou outbreak affected eight people and was caused by contaminated chopped zucchini from Spain that was put in a salad.

Decline for other causes of illness

The number of *Salmonella* cases continued to decline and was 522 compared to 1,182 in 2019.

Domestic *Salmonella* infections were caused by 37 different serotypes. Of these, the four most common were Typhimurium, Group B, Saintpaul, and Enteritidis. They caused 64 percent of infections.

For enterohaemorrhagic *E. coli* (EHEC), 175 cases were reported to the registry compared to 311 in 2019.

Incidence was highest among those aged up to 4 years old. In total, 125 infections were classed as domestic. Strains came from 37 O-serogroups, the most common being O157, O103 and O26.

A total of 865 cases of norovirus were reported versus 3,388 in 2019. They mainly fell sick between January and May. Cases occurred in all age groups, but slightly more than half were over 75 years old and women accounted for 59 percent of infections.

In 2020, there were 403 cases of *Yersinia enterocolitica* compared to 485 in 2019. Incidence was highest in those aged 25 to 29.

A total of 41 Shigella patients were reported in 2020, down from 154 in 2019, and eight were domestic infections. The most common types were Shigella flexneri and Shigella sonnei.

FSA reveals some imports missed required checks



Some products have gone through an English port without the necessary controls, according to the Food Standards Agency's chief executive.

Emily Miles said the items came through the European Union to Great Britain from non-EU countries without checks since the start of this year.

“There have been a small number of imports that have come through Dover which is not a recognized border control post for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) products and so the correct checks have not taken place on those imports. As far as we are aware there has been no evidence of risk to animal or public health and we consider this to be a business compliance issue. We think it's only about 55 importers who've been doing it and 20 of those do about 90 percent of

the products,” she said during the FSA's board meeting this past week.

The goods are products of animal origin such as meat, eggs and milk and high risk food not of animal origin, which can be nuts or herbs from certain countries. They are supposed to come through other ports such as Felixstowe.

Progress toward solution

Miles said the FSA and local authorities are ensuring importers follow the correct procedures. This involves monitoring and tracing goods that have gone through this route and local authorities taking enforcement action on non-compliant consignments, including re-export or destruction.

Colin Sullivan, FSA chief operating officer, said there are capacity issues in terms of space at Dover.

“The goods transited through the EU to Great Britain require checks and shouldn't be brought through Dover. In the longer term, there will be checks coming from the EU,” he said.

“We have been tracking the goods that haven't been not pre-notified and have come through Dover. We have contacted all the importers involved and highlighted their goods are non-compliant and the bulk of those goods are now coming through other ports. We have largely dealt with the initial issue although we continue to track the data. Having spoken to importers the number of consignments coming through Dover are reducing significantly.”

Miles also covered the hepatitis A outbreak linked to dates from Jordan and a Salmonella outbreak traced to frozen raw breaded processed chicken products from Poland.

She noted the Salmonella Enteritidis outbreak situation was improving with 462

cases reported in 2020 but only 37 in 2021. There have been more than 50 product withdrawals. Investigations are continuing to look for the Polish sources of the two strains of Salmonella Enteritidis.

The FSA will also do a risk analysis following a European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opinion in early May saying that Titanium Dioxide (E171) is no longer safe. It is a food color used in a range of products to make them white. This is expected to lead to a ban in Europe.

Official vets, shellfish and NRL sale

Miles also spoke about the availability of official vets, seawater classification for shellfish beds and the possibility of Fera being sold.

Increased requirements for certification have put more demands on Official Veterinarian (OV) resources with further pressure on capacity expected when checks on EU imports are started.

FSA and Eville and Jones are tackling concerns on recruitment and retention of official veterinarian resources. Eville and Jones won a 3-year contract in 2020 to supply official control services in meat and dairy plants. The FSA agreed to provide additional funding of £136,000 (\$192,500) monthly for up to 12 months to help address the issue of recruitment and retention of vets.

The EU does not allow import of live bivalve mollusks, such as oysters, clams and mussels, from class B waters unless they have been purified. Production areas are classified as A, B or C, with A as the least and C as the most contaminated. By May, the FSA revised classifications which allowed 20 harvesting areas to get Class A status for all or part of the year.

Fera Science is part of the UK's national lab and science capability but is one of a

number of businesses being divested by its owner, Capita.

The FSA relies on Fera as a national reference laboratory and a research contractor. Roles include supporting official control laboratories, providing expert testing capability, and generating evidence to support risk assessment and management

Miles said the likelihood of service to the FSA being disrupted at this stage is low.

“Having talked to Fera I am not concerned at the moment about the resilience of the network and whether we are going to lose access to particular sorts of checks. It is a slow burn process and I feel reasonably confident that we will continue to benefit from their service.”

Julie Pierce, director of openness, data and digital, said: “We are monitoring as far as we can where their plans are and we are considering any remedial action we might need to take. In our longer term plans we are looking at laboratory provision overall considering what our requirements are.”

Finally, FSA and Food Standards Scotland plan to produce an annual report on the UK's food safety and standards. The first one is expected to focus on changes to food standards since the end of the EU exit transition period in Jan. 2021 and will be published around spring 2022.

Enterprise News

Lawsuits piling up against baby food firms over potential damage to infant brain development



There are reports of more than 80 lawsuits filed against firms that were named in a February congressional report about highly dangerous levels of arsenic and other poisons in baby food.

The report, requested by federal legislators in November 2019, reviewed four toxic heavy metals: inorganic arsenic, lead, cadmium and mercury. The Food and Drug Administration and the World Health Organization have declared them dangerous to human health, particularly to babies and children, who are most vulnerable to their neurotoxic effects. Even low levels of exposure can cause serious and often irreversible damage to brain development, according to the

report.

On Nov. 6, 2019, following reports of high levels of toxic heavy metals in baby foods, the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy requested internal documents and test results from some of the largest manufacturers of baby food in the United States, including makers of organic and conventional products. Arsenic was present in baby foods made by all companies that responded to the congressional request.

Manufacturers listed in the report include Beech-Nut, Earth's Best Organic, HappyBABY, Happy Family Organics, Gerber, Parent's Choice, Plum Organics and Sprout Organic Foods.

In March, a group of plaintiffs filed a request to consolidate their claims against the baby food makers before a judge in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, where a majority of the cases are pending.

The U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation denied the transfer on June 7, finding that cases would be too defendant specific.

“At a general level, these actions are similar. All plaintiffs allege that defendants knowingly sold baby food products containing heavy metals and did not disclose this in their marketing. It is not disputed, though, that each defendant manufactures, markets, and distributes its own baby food products subject to different manufacturing processes, suppliers, and quality control procedures,” the judicial panel said.

“The claims against each defendant thus are likely to rise or fall on facts specific to that defendant, such as the amount of heavy metals in its products, the results of its internal testing, if any, and its marketing strategies.”

Some of the lawsuits include groups of parents who contend that the toxins found in the baby food led to the development of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in their children.

Beech-Nut discontinues rice cereal

On June 9, 2021, The Beech-Nut Nutrition Co. initiated a recall of some of its infant rice cereals because of excessive levels of arsenic. And now the company will stop selling infant rice cereal altogether, saying it may not be able to consistently abide by the guidance level in the future.

“The safety of infants and children is Beech-Nut’s top priority,” said Jason Jacobs, Beech-Nut vice president of food safety and quality.

“We are issuing this voluntary recall, because we learned through routine sampling by the State of Alaska that a limited quantity of Beech-Nut Single Grain Rice Cereal products had levels of naturally-occurring inorganic arsenic above the FDA guidance level, even though the rice flour used to produce these products tested below the FDA guidance level for inorganic arsenic,” said Jason Jacobs, vice president, Food Safety and Quality.

The recall follows the FDA guidance level limits on inorganic arsenic in infant rice cereal set in August 2020. There are no limits on arsenic in other baby foods or limits for other heavy metals, including cadmium, lead, and mercury despite the potential health risk to young children.

Al-Rabih brand Tahini recalled over Salmonella concerns

Phoenicia Group Inc. of Ottawa, Canada, is recalling Al-Rabih brand Tahini because of possible Salmonella contamination. This recall was triggered by Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) test results.

The Tahini was distributed in Ontario, Quebec and possibly nationally in Canada. The CFIA is verifying that industry is removing the recalled product from the marketplace.

Recalled product:

Brand	Product	Size	UPC	Codes
Al-Rabih	Tahini (100% Sesame) – Sesame Paste	454 g	7 70338 10053 5	Lot #157 29420 Best before 22/OC/19



The CFIA recommends that consumers check to see if they have the recalled product in their home. Recalled products should be thrown out or returned to the store where they were purchased.

As of the posting of this recall, there have been no reported illnesses associated with the consumption of this product.

About Salmonella infections

Food contaminated with Salmonella bacteria does not usually look, smell, or taste spoiled. Anyone can become sick with a Salmonella infection.

Infants, children, seniors, and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of serious illness because their immune systems are fragile, according

to the CDC.

Anyone who has handled any of the recalled Tahini and developed symptoms of Salmonella infection should seek medical attention. Sick people should tell their doctors about the possible exposure to Salmonella bacteria because special tests are necessary to diagnose salmonellosis. Salmonella infection symptoms can mimic other illnesses, frequently leading to misdiagnosis.

Symptoms of Salmonella infection can include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever within 12 to 72 hours after eating contaminated food. Otherwise, healthy adults are usually sick for four to seven days. In some cases, however, diarrhea may be so severe that patients require hospitalization.

Older adults, children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems, such as cancer patients, are more likely to develop a severe illness and serious, sometimes life-threatening conditions.

Some people get infected without getting sick or showing any symptoms. However, they may still spread the infections to others.

Beach-Nut recalls infant rice cereal, terminates production of single grain rice cereal and earns praise from CR

The Beech-Nut Nutrition Co. Tuesday initiated a recall of some of its infant cereal because of excessive levels of arsenic. Also, the company will stop selling it, saying it may not be able to consistently abide by the guidance level in the future.

Consumer Reports immediately praised the Beach-Nut recall announcement for the infant cereal because the levels of inorganic arsenic in it exceed the guidance level adopted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The limits are in place

to protect infants and toddlers from exposure to arsenic.

The recalled Beech-Nut Stage 1 Single Grain Rice cereal has a UPC number of 52200034705, an expiration date of 01 MAY 2022, and product codes 103470XXXX and 093470XXXX. The expiration date and product numbers can be found at the bottom of the Beech-Nut Single Rice Cereal canister. These specific product codes were distributed nationally through retail and online sales.

“The safety of infants and children is Beech-Nut’s top priority,” said Jason Jacobs, Beech-Nut vice president of food safety and quality.

“We are issuing this voluntary recall, because we learned through routine sampling by the State of Alaska that a limited quantity of Beech-Nut Single Grain Rice Cereal products had levels of naturally-occurring inorganic arsenic above the FDA guidance level, even though the rice flour used to produce these products tested below the FDA guidance level for inorganic arsenic,” said Jason Jacobs, Vice President, Food Safety and Quality.

No illnesses related to these product codes have been reported to date, and no other production dates or Beech-Nut products are affected by the recall.

The recall follows the FDA guidance level limits on inorganic arsenic in infant rice cereal set in August 2020. There are no limits on arsenic in other baby foods or limits for other heavy metals, including cadmium, lead, and mercury despite the potential health risk to young children.

Consumer Reports is calling on Congress to require the FDA to adopt strict limits by approving the Baby Food Safety Act of 2021.

“We’ve known for years that toxic heavy metals are found in popular baby foods and can lead to serious health problems in children over time,” said Brian

Ronholm, director of food policy for Consumer Reports.



“This recall underscores why we need strict limits to keep dangerous heavy metals out of the food that so many parents serve their young children every day. Congress should pass the Baby Food Safety Act so that the FDA can better protect vulnerable infants and toddlers from being exposed to toxic substances in the food they eat.”

Ronholm is a former USDA deputy undersecretary for food safety.

For more than a decade, Consumer Reports (CR) has called on the FDA to establish strict limits because its own tests and research by others has shown concerning levels of heavy metals in baby food that can pose serious health problems in children. In April, the FDA announced an action plan to reduce heavy metals in baby food, but the timeline for adopting limits would leave infants exposed to the higher levels of toxic substances for the next several years. It’s

unclear whether the plan will result in the kind of strict limits needed to protect children, according to Consumer Reports.

Founded in 1936, the independent and nonprofit CR is one of the nation’s oldest consumer groups.

The Baby Food Safety Act of 2021 would require the FDA to establish aggressive limits for baby cereal and all other baby foods for cadmium, inorganic arsenic, lead and mercury. It would go into effect two years after the bill is signed into law. It has been introduced in Congress.

The FDA recognizes that trace elements such as these are widely present in the environment, including water, soil, and food and has also stated that exposure to elevated levels of naturally occurring inorganic arsenic can pose a health hazard to young children.

Beech-Nut decided to exit the market for Beech-Nut branded Single Grain Rice Cereal. Beech-Nut out of concern for its ability to consistently obtain rice flour well below the FDA guidance level and Beech-Nut specifications for naturally occurring inorganic arsenic.

Consumers who may have purchased Beech-Nut Rice Cereal with product codes: 103470XXXX and 093470XXXX with the expiration of 01 MAY 2022 should discard the product. They can also go to www.beechnut.com/ricecereal, or call 866-272-9417 for further information on obtaining an exchange or refund.

Costco supplier recalls frozen treats because of metal fragments

Clio Snacks has initiated a recall of some frozen treats because they may contain very small metallic fragments from a piece of production equipment/machinery. Clio brand snacks are sold by Costco.

“The problem was identified and was promptly corrected. No injuries have been reported. The items that may have been impacted and are subject to the recall are listed below the recall actions requested,” according to a recall notice on the Costco website.

Any consumers who have the affected products are urged to dispose of them immediately. Consumers can contact info@cliosnacks.com with proof of purchase for reimbursement in the form of a print-at-home or physical coupon, according to the recall notice.

“Our team remains in close communications with the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and has taken proactive measures in remedying this situation. We are working with our trusted retail partners to implement the recall and remove the affected lots from shelf,” according to the Clio notice.

Consumers with questions can also contact the company via email at info@cliosnacks.com.

The recalled products are:

- Clio Snacks Mixed Berry & Peach Less Sugar, 16 count, UCP number 854021008220, expiration dates ranging from 2/14/2021 to 7/11/2021;
- Clio Snacks Vanilla & Strawberry Minis 24 count, UPC number 854021008138, expiration dates from 2/21/2021 to 7/4/2021; and
- Clio Snacks Vanilla & Strawberry 16 count, UPC number 854021008022, expiration dates from 2/14/2021 to 5/9/2021.

Almost 34 tons of beef jerky recalled because of misbranding, undeclared sesame



A California company is recalling more than 67,800 pounds of beef jerky because of misbranding and undeclared sesame oil, according to a recall notice posted by the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

Legacy Food Company Inc. of Rancho Cucamonga, CA, produced the beef jerky on various dates from July 20, 2020 through May 14 this year. The recall notice did not include use-by or best-by dates for the products.

“The problem was discovered during routine FSIS label verification activities

when it was determined that the labels did not accurately list all sub-ingredients,” according to the recall notice. “There have been no confirmed reports of adverse reactions due to consumption of these products.”

Any one concerned about an allergic reaction because of the undeclared sesame should contact their health care provider.

Consumers can use the following label information to determine whether they have any of the jerky products:

- 10-lb. packages containing “N4 Vua Kho Bo Curry Beef Jerky.”
- 10-lb. packages containing “N8 Vua Kho Bo Flank Steak Beef Jerky Fish Sauce.”
- 10-lb. packages containing “N9 Vua Kho Bo House Special Beef Jerky Fish Sauce.”
- 10-lb. packages containing “Vua Kho Bo Hot Beef Jerky.”
- 10-lb. packages containing “Hot Peppered Beef Jerky.”
- 16-oz packages containing “Formosa Brand Hot Peppered Beef Jerky.”

The 10-pound products subject to recall bear establishment number “Est. 8256” and the 16-oz product listed above bears establishment number “EST 2446” inside the USDA mark of inspection.

These items were sold online and shipped to retail stores in California. The 10-pound products are sold in bulk packaging and were removed from their original packaging and repackaged and relabeled for online sales. Retail stores remove the products from their original packaging and display them in bins for sale.

Consumers who have purchased these products are urged not to consume them. These products should be thrown away or returned to the place of purchase, according to the FSIS.

MARKET NEWS - REPLY

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