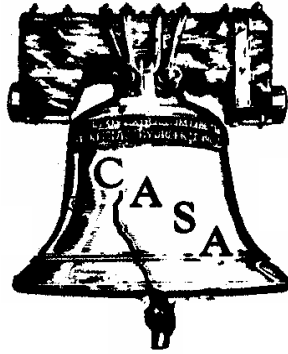


THE BELL RINGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE OF THE
CENTRAL ATLANTIC STATES ASSOCIATION OF FOOD AND DRUG

FALL 2006



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As summer closes and fall begins, it brings to mind the start of school. It is with education that we have all got to where we are today. One of the main goals of the conference is to educate its members. We strive to present current newsworthy topics for all members as well as basic subjects for members that are new to the field of environmental health. As it has been said in the past, our organization would not exist without members. It is, also, of utmost importance that we try to meet the needs of our members. Therefore, I would like to request from the membership that you provide the organization with a list of topics that you would like to be presented.

In addition, we are always looking for ways to increase our membership. If anyone knows of any individual, agency or organization that they feel might benefit from membership in our conference, please e-mail me at bernard.finkel@phila.gov with any contact information.

To those of you that have had interesting job related experiences or know of something that would interest the members, please provide it to the conference so that we can publish it in the Bell Ringer. The Bell Ringer can also be used as a source for advertising. For those agencies with job openings, the Bell Ringer is the perfect place to advertise for a target audience.

*Sincerely,
Bernie Finkel*

Federal News

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will continue to provide the public with regular updates on the E. coli O157:H7 outbreak each day until further notice.

Case Reports

To date, 146 cases of illness due to E. coli infection have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including 23 cases of Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS), 76 hospitalizations, and one death. Illnesses continue to be reported to CDC. This is considered to be an ongoing investigation.

States Affected

Arizona and Colorado have just been added to the list of states with confirmed cases. There are now 23 affected states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Laboratory Findings

The New Mexico Department of Health announced today that it has linked a sample from a package of spinach with the outbreak strain of E. coli O157. The spinach was eaten by one of New Mexico's patients before becoming sick. DNA fingerprinting tests determined that the strain from the spinach matches the strain from patients in the outbreak. The package of spinach that tested positive was "Dole Baby Spinach, Best if Used by August 30."

Consumer Advice

FDA advises consumers to not eat fresh spinach or products that contain fresh spinach until further notice. Fresh spinach includes bagged spinach, spinach in a clamshell, and loose spinach purchased from

retail establishments such as supermarkets, restaurants and farmers' markets.

At this time, FDA has no evidence that frozen spinach, canned spinach and spinach included in pre-made meals manufactured by food companies are affected. These products are safe to eat. If individuals believe they may have experienced symptoms of illness after consuming fresh spinach or fresh spinach-containing products, FDA recommends that they seek medical advice.

Three (3) Recalls

On September 19, 2006, RLB Food Distributors, L.P., West Caldwell, NJ, initiated a voluntary recall of certain salad products that may contain spinach with an Enjoy Thru date of 9/20/06. See: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/po/firmrecalls/rlb0906.html>.

The products recalled by RLB are:

Balducci's Mesclun Mix	5 oz.
Balducci's Organic Baby Spinach	5 oz.
Balducci's Mixed Greens	5 oz.
FreshPro Mesclun Mix	5 oz.
FreshPro Organic Baby Spinach	5 oz.
FreshPro Mixed Greens	5 oz.
FreshPro Salad Mix with Italian Dressing	4.75 oz.
FreshPro Salad Mix with Ranch Dressing	5.25 oz.

On September 17, 2006, River Ranch, of Salinas, California, announced a voluntary recall of packages of spring mix containing spinach. River Ranch obtained bulk spring mix containing spinach from Natural Selections. The following brands are involved: Fresh N' Easy Spring Mix and Hy-Vee Spring mix containing baby spinach, distributed to retailers in Texas, Iowa and New Mexico. Product was packed in 5 oz. bags and 5 oz. plastic trays. Products that do

Federal News Continued

not contain spinach are not part of this recall.

On September 15, 2006, Natural Selection Foods, LLC, of San Juan Bautista, California, announced a voluntary recall of all products containing spinach in all brands they pack with "Best if Used by Dates" of August 17, 2006 through October 1, 2006. These products include spinach and any salad with spinach in a blend, both retail and food service products. Products that do not contain spinach are not part of this recall.

Natural Selection Foods, LLC brands include: Natural Selection Foods, Pride of San Juan, Earthbound Farm, Bellissima, Dole, Rave Spinach, Emeril, Sysco, O Organic, Fresh Point, River Ranch, Superior, Nature's Basket, Pro-Mark, Compliments, Trader Joe's, Ready Pac, Jansal Valley, Cheney Brothers, D'Arrigo Brothers, Green Harvest, Mann, Mills Family Farm, Premium Fresh, Snoboy, The Farmer's Market, Tanimura & Antle, President's Choice, Cross Valley, and Riverside Farms.

The affected products were also distributed to Canada, Mexico, and Taiwan. No illnesses have been reported from these countries. FDA continues to investigate whether other companies and brands are involved.

Symptoms of *E. coli* O157:H7 Illness

E. coli O157:H7 causes diarrhea, often with bloody stools. Although most healthy adults can recover completely within a week, some people can develop a form of kidney failure called HUS. HUS is most likely to occur in young children and the elderly. The condition can lead to serious kidney damage and even death.

Lettuce Safety Initiative

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) developed the Lettuce Safety Initiative as a response to the recurring outbreaks of *E. coli* O157:H7 associated with fresh and fresh-cut lettuce. The Initiative is intended to reduce public health risks by focusing on the product, agents, and areas of greatest concern. An important goal of the Initiative is to demonstrate FDA's commitment and concern about the safety of lettuce to the industry. The Initiative supports the goals of the [2004 FDA Produce Safety Action Plan](#), which is intended to minimize the incidence of foodborne illness associated with consumption of fresh produce. The Initiative will begin with this fall's lettuce harvest season.

A majority of the outbreaks traced product back to California. Outbreak and farm investigational data have been reviewed in order to develop and most effectively target resources. Using a risk-based approach, resources will be directed toward the areas that are most likely to be the source of contamination, based on (1) current though limited information; and, (2) the season and geographic region historically associated with outbreaks. FDA will continue to coordinate and closely collaborate with the State of California's Department of Health Services and Department of Food and Agriculture.

The objectives of the Lettuce Safety Initiative are as follows:

- Assess current industry approaches and actions to address the issue of improving lettuce safety. If appropriate, stimulate segments of the industry to further advance efforts in addressing all aspects of improving lettuce safety.

Federal News Continued

- Alert consumers early and respond rapidly in the event of an outbreak.
- Document observations that identify practices that potentially lead to product contamination. Then, develop and/or refine guidance and policy that will minimize opportunities for future outbreaks and/or identify research needs.
- Consider regulatory action, as appropriate, based on conditions and practices that could lead to, or spread contamination, or when lettuce has been adulterated.

To begin the Initiative, FDA, in cooperation with California's Department of Health Services and Department of Food and Agriculture, will issue an assignment to visit farms and cooling and packing facilities, and inspect processors, focusing on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs). FDA will evaluate practices and processes for potential sources of contamination. Other components of the Initiative include continuing outreach with the industry at all points in the supply chain, facilitating and promoting research on lettuce safety, and working with federal, state and local public health officials in disease detection and outbreak response.

Additional Information: FDA continues to work closely with the CDC and state and local agencies to determine the cause and scope of the *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak in spinach. Please check www.fda.gov for updates..



FDA Warns Consumers Not To Drink Bolthouse Farms Carrot Juice Due to Botulism Concerns

In response to a fourth case of botulism being linked to Bolthouse Farms, Bakersfield, California brand carrot juice, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is warning consumers not to drink Bolthouse Farms Carrot Juice, 450 ml and 1 liter plastic bottles, with "BEST IF USED BY" dates of NOV 11 2006 or earlier. Consumers should discard this product. FDA is also reiterating its advice to consumers to keep carrot juice — including pasteurized carrot juice — refrigerated.

The fourth case of botulism poisoning involves an adult female in Florida who is currently suffering from paralysis. To date, one link between the illness and the consumers appears to be that the juice they drank was not properly refrigerated once it was in the home, which allowed the *Clostridium botulinum* spores to grow and produce toxin. FDA is investigating other possible links.

Clostridium botulinum is a bacterium commonly found in soil. Under certain conditions these bacteria can produce a toxin that if ingested can result in botulism, a disease that may cause paralysis or death. Cases of botulism from processed food are extremely rare in the U.S.

Symptoms of botulism can include: double-vision, droopy eyelids, altered voice, trouble with speaking or swallowing, and paralysis on both sides of the body that progresses from the neck down, possibly followed by difficulty in breathing. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

Adequate refrigeration is one of the keys to food safety and is essential to preventing bacterial growth. Refrigerator temperatures

Federal News Continued

should be no higher than 40°F and freezer temperatures no higher than 0°F. Consumers should check the temperatures occasionally with an appliance thermometer.

Consumers should look for the words "Keep Refrigerated" on juice labels so they know which products must be kept refrigerated. FDA is looking into whether industry's current juice labels provide clear refrigeration instructions.



Illinois Wild Bird Samples Undergo Additional Avian Influenza Testing

WASHINGTON, Sept. 29, 2006 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of the Interior (DOI) today announced a detection of the H5 and N1 avian influenza subtypes in samples from wild, migratory Green-winged Teals in Illinois. Initial tests confirm that these wild duck samples do not contain the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain that has spread through birds in Asia, Europe and Africa. These samples were collected from apparently healthy birds and initial test results indicate the presence of low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) virus, which poses no threat to human health.

The bird samples were collected on Sept. 24 in the Rice Lake Conservation Area of Fulton County, Illinois, through a partnership between USDA and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources as part of

an expanded wild bird monitoring program. USDA and DOI are working collaboratively with states to sample wild birds throughout the U.S. for the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). As a result of this expanded testing program, USDA and DOI expect to identify additional cases of common strains of avian influenza in birds, which is not cause for concern.

The ducks were showing no sign of sickness, which also suggests this is LPAI. Eleven samples were collected directly from the ducks. Of those samples, a pool of five samples tested positive for H5 and were sent to USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, for confirmatory testing. One of the five samples screened by NVSL tested positive for both H5 and N1. However, this does not mean these ducks are infected with an H5N1 strain. It is possible that there could be two separate avian influenza viruses, one containing H5 and the other containing N1. Confirmatory testing underway at NVSL will clarify whether one or more strains of the virus are present, the specific subtype, as well as confirm the pathogenicity. These results are expected within two to three weeks and will be made public when completed.

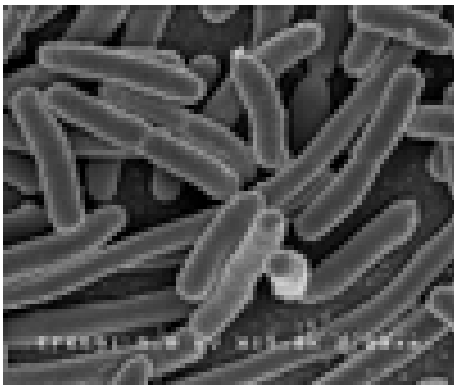
Low pathogenic avian influenza commonly occurs in wild birds and can be found in a number of duck populations including the Green-winged Teal. It typically causes only minor sickness or no noticeable symptoms in birds. These strains of the virus include LPAI H5N1, commonly referred to as "North American" H5N1, which is very different from the more severe HPAI H5N1 circulating overseas.

Duck populations, including Green-winged Teal, are commonly hunted. There is no known health risk to hunters or hunting dogs

Federal & State News

from contact with low pathogenic forms of avian influenza virus. Nevertheless, hunters are always encouraged to use common sense sanitation practices, such as hand washing and thorough cooking, when handling or preparing wildlife of any kind. DOI has issued guidelines for safe handling and preparation of wild game.

For more information about USDA's efforts and research related to avian influenza, go to <http://www.usda.gov/birdflu>. For more information about Interior's efforts and hunter education program, go to <http://www.doi.gov/issues/avianflu.html>. For information about the federal government's overall efforts related to avian influenza and human pandemic preparedness, go to <http://www.avianflu.gov>.



Update on Multi-State Outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 Infections From Fresh Spinach,

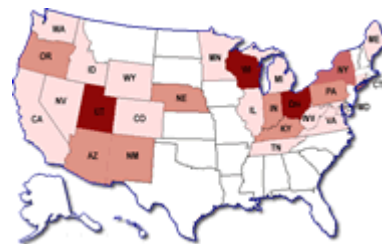
As of 1 PM (ET) September 28, 2006, Thursday, 187 persons infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported to CDC from 26 states.

Among the ill persons, 97 (52%) were hospitalized, 29 (16%) developed a type of kidney failure called hemolytic-uremic syndrome (HUS), and an adult in Wisconsin died. One hundred thirty-four (72%) were female and 18 (10%) were children under 5

years old. The proportion of persons who developed HUS was 29% in children (<18 years old), 7% in persons 18 to 59 years old, and 14% in persons 60 years old or older. Among ill persons who provided the date when their illnesses began, 82% became ill between August 19 and September 5. The peak time when illnesses began was August 30 to September 1 -- 32% of persons with the outbreak strain became ill on one of those 3 days.

Two deaths among suspect cases have been reported. Suspect cases are not known to have been infected with the outbreak strain, so are not included in the confirmed case count. Idaho is investigating a suspect case in a 2-year-old child with HUS who died on September 20 and reportedly had recently consumed fresh spinach. *E. coli* O157 has not been detected in the child. Maryland is investigating a suspect case in an elderly woman who died on September 13 and had recently consumed fresh spinach. *E. coli* O157 was cultured from her stool, but "DNA fingerprinting" to determine whether it is the outbreak strain has not been possible.

E. coli O157 was isolated from 9 packages of spinach supplied by patients living in 7 states. All packages were marketed as baby spinach and labeled with the same brand name. The "DNA fingerprints" of all 9 of these *E. coli* match that of the outbreak strain.



Outbreaks Reported by State



From the Editor

Well it is already fall and the kids are back to school and the leaves are turning colors. As you know we are continuing our efforts to encourage participation in the Bell Ringer, so if you have a story idea, an announcement, or information, please email it to me at palak.raval-nelson@phila.gov. Also, feel free to provide feedback on the articles in the issues or write a letter to the Editor. Lastly, space is available for advertising in the Bell Ringer, just send me the information in an email and I will contact you. I look forward to your feedback and participation. Enjoy the summer before the temperature

Tentative Schedule of Meetings

Winter: December 1, 2006

Spring: March 16, 2007

Annual Conference: May 15 to 17 2007

**Make sure to
register your email
on the CASA
website:
[http://www.casafdo.
org/](http://www.casafdo.org/)**

**Hey, do you know some
one that would make a
great CASA member?**

**Bring them to a meeting!
Tell them about CASA!
Get them to join!**