

The Bell Ringer

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

FALL 2005



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With the year that all of us are having, the challenges we are faced with from 9/11, the war, high gas prices, cut backs in all the many agencies we work for, and now Katrina, CASA remains strong and changing to meet our member's needs. Our hearts and prayers go out to the women and men of Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida in the face of all the challenges. Our sister organization, FDA has sent people to help with the hurricane relief effort. Please be kind and give what you can to help in any way.

Your board has submitted changes in our constitution to the national conference of CASA for their approval. When approved, the membership will get to review it (constitution) and then vote on the changes. Comments from the membership are welcomed before the final vote. The continued goal of the Philadelphia Conference is to get all of our members more involved with the conference.

I hope to see all of you at the fall training at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA on September 30, 2005. We provide at least one day of training per quarter. Our conference is unique in the training sessions that we provide to our members. As a member of CASA, you have the right to be heard and your board will listen to all members. You can send information to me via email at ptaylor@state.pa.us or glgrazer@dejazzd.com or by mail to 399 Landis Store Road, Boyertown, PA 19512.

I look forward to working for you as we continue to make the Philadelphia Conference the great organization that it is.

*Thank you,
Patricia A. Taylor*

Federal News

FDA Offers Valuable Food Safety Information for Hurricane Aftermath

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is providing important tips to help people affected by these storms to protect their health and food supply. As Hurricane Katrina has been predicted to hit the Gulf Coast, the FDA wants area residents to be prepared for the storm and its aftermath.

If flooding occurs, an immediate evaluation of the stored food and water supply should be done. Perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk and eggs that are not properly refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if consumed, even when it is thoroughly cooked.

Here's what FDA suggests consumers can do at home to keep their food safe:

Food safety when the power goes out

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. Buy dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot fully-stocked freezer cold for two days.
- If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while they are still at safe temperatures, it's important that the food is thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to assure that any food borne bacteria that may be present is destroyed.

- Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.
- For infants, if possible, use prepared, canned baby formula that requires no added water. When using concentrated or powdered formulas, prepare with bottled water if the local water source is potentially contaminated.

Once the power is restored

- Once the power is restored you will need to evaluate the safety of the food. If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when the power comes back on. If the thermometer stored in the freezer reads 40 degrees F or below the food is safe and may be refrozen. If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine the safety. Remember, you can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 degrees F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power is out for no more than 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40 degrees F for two hours or more.

Food and Water Safety During Hurricanes and Floods

- Hurricanes, especially if accompanied by a tidal surge or flooding, can contaminate the public water supply. Drinking contaminated water may cause illness. You cannot

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assume that the water in the hurricane-affected area is safe to drink. Listen to local announcements for updated information on the safety of the water supply.

- If bottled water is not available and the safety of tap water is questionable, follow these directions to purify it:

- If you have a heat source available, boil the water vigorously (water should be bubbling and rolling for 1 to 3 minutes). (www.cdc.gov)

- If you can't boil water, add 8 drops of newly purchased, unscented liquid household bleach per gallon of water, stir it well and let the water stand for 30 minutes before you use it. Note that using bleach will not kill parasitic organisms. (EPA-Emergency Disinfection of Water)

- You can also use water-purifying tablets from your local pharmacy or sporting goods store. (www.cdc.gov)

- Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. Discard any food without a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with floodwater. Undamaged,

commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the labels, thoroughly wash the cans and disinfect them with a solution consisting of 1/4 cup of bleach per gallon of water for clean surfaces. Re-label your cans, including the expiration date, with a marker. Food containers with screw-caps, snap lids, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come in contact with flood water because they cannot be disinfected.

- Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers. There is no way to safely clean them if they have come in contact with contaminated flood waters. Thoroughly wash metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils with soap and hot water. They should then be sanitized by boiling in clean water or immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1/4 cup of chlorine bleach per gallon of water.

For more information on safe food handling, go to www.foodsafety.gov or call FDA's toll-free information line at 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366).

FDA Amends Interim Final Rule "Use of Materials Derived from Cattle in Human Food and Cosmetics"

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today published several amendments to the July 2004 interim final rule, "Use of Materials Derived from Cattle

in Human Food and Cosmetics," that will allow the use of certain cattle-derived material in human foods and cosmetics.

The rule prohibits the use of cattle-derived materials that can carry the infectious agent for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease,

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in human foods, dietary supplements, and in cosmetics. Based on the scientific information provided during the interim final rule's comment period, which demonstrates that a part of the cow's digestive tract called the distal ileum can be consistently and effectively removed from the other sections of the small intestine, it is no longer necessary to designate the entire small intestine as a prohibited cattle material.

As a result, FDA is amending the rule to allow use of the small intestine in human food and cosmetics, provided that the distal ileum has been removed. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is publishing today a similar amendment to its interim final rule on BSE.

Finally, FDA has reconsidered the recommended method for determining insoluble impurities in a type of solid fat known as tallow, in response to information submitted to the agency, to cite a method that is less costly to use and requires less specialized equipment.

FDA issued the interim final rule to minimize human exposure to materials that studies have demonstrated are highly likely to contain the BSE agent in cattle with the disease. The amended interim final rule provides the same level of protection against the agent that causes BSE as the original provisions.

The amendments to the interim final rule are effective on October 7, 2005 and comments are being accepted on the amendments through November 7, 2005.

SEPTEMBER IS National Food Safety Education Month®
2005 Theme:



Mexico To Lift Ban On Pennsylvania Poultry Imports

Good News for Pennsylvania's Poultry Farmers, Governor Edward G. Rendell said today that the state's poultry farmers will once again be allowed to export poultry products to Mexico. The Mexican government has agreed to lift the year-and-a-half ban on imports of Pennsylvania poultry to Mexico by Oct. 4. The decision was announced at a recent meeting between U.S. and Mexican officials to address poultry trade.

In commenting on the decision, Governor Rendell said, "Lifting this ban is good news for Pennsylvania's poultry farmers. Our farmers will now have access to this valuable export market, meaning millions of dollars in additional sales of Pennsylvania products.

"I want to thank Mexican President Vicente Fox on his government's decision to reopen its market to our poultry products," said Governor Rendell. "After months of

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discussions and efforts by many parties, we are pleased this decision was reached.

"As a trading partner, Pennsylvania has enjoyed mutually beneficial economic relations with Mexico for many years, and we look forward to resuming and expanding poultry exports to one of our top partners."

"Mexico is a large market for us," said Rob Van Naarden, CEO and president of Empire Kosher. "This is great news for Pennsylvania producers, and I congratulate the Governor for his leadership on this issue."

Live and raw poultry products from Pennsylvania have been restricted from being exported to Mexico since February 2004, when an incident of non-H5/H7 avian influenza (AI) occurred in the commonwealth. This occurrence was different from the avian influenza currently causing human illness in Asia. Non-H5/H7 avian influenza does not represent a threat to human health. Pennsylvania has world-class safety standards regarding poultry products. Since then, state officials have worked closely with the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Food Safety Inspection Service, and other officials to demonstrate the safety of Pennsylvania's poultry operations to regulators at the Mexican Department of Agriculture.

Pennsylvania is a leader in avian influenza testing and routinely performs AI tests on more than 200,000 samples per year. As a result of continued monitoring, no cases of H5 or H7 AI have occurred in Pennsylvania since 2001. Pennsylvania poultry is exported to many nations including Singapore, Canada and the European Union.

Industry sources estimate that Mexico is a multi-million dollar market for Pennsylvania poultry products.

<http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/agriculture/cwp/view.asp?A=390&Q=136258>

Noroviruses

Noroviruses are members of a group of viruses called caliciviruses also known previously as "Norwalk-like viruses." Infection with norovirus affects the stomach and intestines, causing an illness called gastroenteritis, or "stomach flu." This "stomach flu" is *not* related to the flu (or influenza), which is a respiratory illness caused by influenza virus. In addition, noroviruses are not related to bacteria and parasites that can cause gastrointestinal illnesses. Norovirus is not a "new" virus, but interest in it is growing as more is learned about how frequently noroviruses cause illness in people.

Norovirus infection causes gastroenteritis, which is an inflammation of the stomach and the small and large intestines. The symptoms of gastroenteritis are nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea accompanied by abdominal cramps. Some people also complain of headache, fever/chills, and muscle aches. Symptoms are usually brief and last only 1 or 2 days. However, during that brief period, people can feel very ill and vomit, often violently and without warning, many times a day. Symptoms usually begin 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. There is no evidence that sick persons can become long-term carriers of the virus, but the virus can be in the stool and vomit of infected persons, from the day they start to feel ill to as long as 2 weeks after they feel better.

Other infectious and non-infectious agents can cause symptoms similar to those of norovirus gastroenteritis; people who have these symptoms and have questions about the cause of their illness should consult a physician.

Norovirus gastroenteritis is usually not a serious illness, and other than drinking

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liquids to prevent dehydration, there is no specific treatment. Most people recover completely within 1 to 2 days, with no long-term complications of norovirus illness. However, persons who are unable to drink enough liquids to replace those lost with vomiting and/or diarrhea may become dehydrated and require special medical attention. These people include young children, the elderly, and persons of any age unable to care for themselves.

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected with the virus in several ways, including: eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus; touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then placing their hand in their mouth; and having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill).

Food and drinks can very easily become contaminated with norovirus because the virus is so small and because it probably takes fewer than 100 norovirus particles to make a person sick. Food can be contaminated either by direct contact with contaminated hands or work surfaces that are contaminated with stool or vomit, or by tiny droplets from nearby vomit that can travel through air to land on food. Although the virus cannot multiply outside of human bodies, once on food or in water, it can cause illness.

Some foods can be contaminated with norovirus *before* being delivered to a restaurant or store. Several outbreaks have been caused by the consumption of oysters harvested from contaminated waters. Other produce such as salads and frozen fruit may also be contaminated at source.

People working with food who are sick with norovirus gastroenteritis are a particular risk to others, because they handle the food and drink many other people will consume. Since the virus is so small, a sick food handler can easily – without meaning to – contaminate the food he or she is handling. Many of those eating the contaminated food may become ill, causing an outbreak.

Outbreaks of norovirus gastroenteritis have taken place in restaurants, cruise ships, nursing homes, hospitals, schools, banquet halls, summer camps, and family dinners – in other words, places where often people have consumed water and/or food prepared or handled by others. It is estimated that as many as half of all food-related outbreaks of illness may be caused by norovirus. In many of these cases, sick food handlers were thought to be implicated.

Many local and state health departments require that food handlers and preparers with gastroenteritis *not* work until 2 or 3 days after they feel better. In addition, because the virus continues to be present in the stool for as long as 2 to 3 weeks after the person feels better, strict hand washing after using the bathroom and before handling food items is important in preventing the spread of this virus. Food handlers who were recently sick can be given different duties in the restaurant so that they do not have to handle food (for example, working the cash register or hostessing).

People who are sick with norovirus illness can often vomit violently, without warning, and the vomit is infectious; therefore, any surfaces near the vomit should be promptly cleaned and disinfected with bleach solution and then rinsed. Furthermore, food items that may have become contaminated with norovirus should

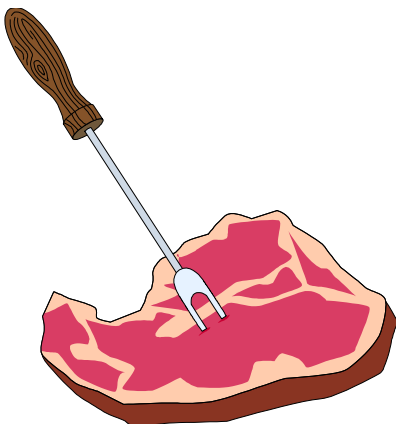
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be thrown out. Linens (including clothes, towels, tablecloths, napkins) soiled to any extent with vomit or stool should be promptly washed at high temperature. Oysters should be obtained from reputable sources and appropriate documentation kept. Washing raw vegetables thoroughly before eating and appropriate disposal of sewage and soiled diapers also help to reduce the spread of norovirus and prevent illness. In small home-based catering businesses or family owned or operated restaurants, sick children and infants in diapers should be excluded from food preparation areas.

In special cases, when there is an outbreak of gastroenteritis there is a need to identify norovirus as the cause of the illness. In these cases, norovirus can often be found in stool samples of infected persons by using special tests. Sometimes blood tests looking for antibodies against norovirus are also performed, when the stool tests are inconclusive or were not done. Food handlers will often be asked for a stool sample or even a blood sample to help investigate the cause of an outbreak.

A person can be infected with norovirus more than once in their lifetime. This is because there are many different noroviruses, and being infected with one type does not prevent infection from another type later. For this reason, it is difficult to develop a vaccine against norovirus.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus-foodhandlers.htm>



Member Profile: Dennis Bauer



Do you know our member in good standing Dennis Bauer, RS? He has been a member since 1976. He heads our committee Chair for Education, food protection on your board. He also serves as Executive to the Philadelphia Conference.

He is currently employed with the Bucks County Health Department in Levittown, PA, for many years. He is a supervisor, but his new title is grandfather and he cannot keep that smile off his face. I dare any of you to ask about his grandchild and then watch his eyes light up and his chest expand from his heart expanding with love.

Please join me in thanking Dennis Bauer for his help, loyalty, generous nature, and benevolent attitude towards CASA now and in the future.

Thank you Dennis Bauer from the Philadelphia conference with gratitude.

Congratulations to Associate member, Jason J. Bauer and wife Pam, on the birth of their son Evan J. Bauer on September 12, 2005. Evan is the first grandchild of Regulatory member Dennis J. Bauer and wife Donna. Another future CASA member???



From the Editor

The Fall Season is upon us and before you know it the snow will be here. 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.

Tentative Schedule of Meetings

Winter: December 2nd,
Philadelphia,

Spring: March 17th,
Elections

Summer: June 16th

**Mark your calendars !
Annual Conference will
be May 16th to 19th**

**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 !**

