The Bell Ringer

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

WINTER 2005

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year the CASA board has made great strides in making our training informative and stimulating. Your board has also been very active in trying to bring our conference into the 21st century, working with our associate members and academician in trying to bridge the gap between untapped organizations and regulators.

Thank you to all for bringing foods canned, bagged foods or grains and other staples to our December meeting. These items will go to the Food Bank of Philadelphia.

I believe that the special guests invited to our December meeting did get an opportunity to see what a great organization we are and the value of belonging to CASA.

Thank you for your efforts to come and shine with me and our guests and I know they enjoyed meeting all of you.

Please have the best holiday season possible and give thanks on how fortunate we all are to have family, friends and love ones on this day.

Happy Holidays to all CASA members in fellowship.

Thank you,
Patricia A. Taylor

Federal News

Key Facts About Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) and Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus

Avian influenza in birds

Avian influenza is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses. These influenza viruses occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the viruses in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. However, avian influenza is very contagious among birds and can make some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, very sick and kill them.

Infected birds shed influenza virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Susceptible birds become infected when they have contact with contaminated secretions or excretions or with surfaces that are contaminated with secretions or excretions from infected birds. Domesticated birds may become infected with avian influenza virus through direct contact with infected waterfowl or other infected poultry, or through contact with surfaces (such as dirt or cages) or materials (such as water or feed) that have been contaminated with the virus.

Infection with avian influenza viruses in domestic poultry causes two main forms of disease that are distinguished by low and high extremes of virulence. The "low pathogenic" form may go undetected and usually causes only mild symptoms (such as ruffled feathers and a drop in egg production). However, the highly pathogenic form spreads more rapidly through flocks of poultry. This form may cause disease that affects multiple internal organs and has a mortality rate that can reach 90-100% often within 48 hours.

Human infection with avian influenza viruses

The risk from avian influenza is generally low to most people because the viruses occur mainly among birds and do not usually infect humans. However, more than 100 human cases of avian influenza infection have been reported since 1997. Most cases of avian influenza infection in humans have resulted from contact with infected poultry (e.g., domesticated chicken, ducks, and turkeys) or surfaces contaminated with secretion/excretions from infected birds. The spread of avian influenza viruses from one ill person to another has been reported very rarely, and transmission has not been observed to continue beyond one person.

There are many different subtypes of type A influenza viruses. These subtypes differ because of changes in certain proteins on the surface of the influenza A virus (hemagglutinin [HA] and neuraminidase [NA] proteins). There are 16 known HA subtypes and 9 known NA subtypes of influenza A viruses. Many different combinations of HA and NA proteins are possible. Each combination represents a different subtype All known subtypes of influenza A viruses can be found in birds.

Usually, "avian influenza virus" refers to influenza A viruses found chiefly in birds, but infections with these viruses can occur in humans. "Human influenza virus" usually refers to those subtypes that spread widely among humans. There are only three known A subtypes of influenza viruses (H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2) currently circulating among humans. It is likely that some genetic parts of current human influenza A viruses came from birds originally. Influenza A viruses are constantly changing, and they might adapt over time to infect and spread among humans.

During an outbreak of avian influenza among poultry, there is a possible risk to people who have contact with infected birds or surfaces that have been contaminated with secretions or excretions from infected birds.

Symptoms of avian influenza in humans have ranged from typical human influenza-like symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches) to eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases (such as acute respiratory distress), and other severe and life-threatening complications. The symptoms of avian influenza may depend on which virus caused the infection.

Studies done in laboratories suggest that the prescription medicines approved in the United States for human influenza viruses should work in treating avian influenza infection in humans. However, influenza viruses can become resistant to these drugs, so these medications may not always work. Additional studies are needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of these medicines.

Avian influenza A (H5N1) in Asia and Europe

Influenza A (H5N1) virus – also called "H5N1 virus" – is an influenza A virus subtype that occurs mainly in birds, is highly contagious among birds, and can be deadly to them.

Outbreaks of avian influenza H5N1 occurred among poultry in eight countries in Asia (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam) during late 2003 and early 2004. At that time, more than 100 million birds in the affected countries either died from the disease or were killed in order to try to control the outbreaks. By March 2004, the outbreak was reported to be under control. Since late June 2004, however, new outbreaks of influenza H5N1 among poultry were reported by several countries in Asia (Cambodia, China [Tibet], Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Russia [Siberia], Thailand, and Vietnam). It is believed that these outbreaks are ongoing. Influenza H5N1 infection also has been reported among poultry in Turkey and Romania and among wild migratory birds in Croatia.

Human cases of influenza A (H5N1) infection have been reported in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. For the most current information about avian influenza and cumulative case numbers, see the World Health Organization (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/ .

Human health risks during the H5N1 outbreak

H5N1 virus does not usually infect people, but more than 100 human cases have been reported since December 2003. Most of these cases have occurred as a result of people having direct or close contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces; however, a few cases of human-to-human spread of H5N1 have occurred.

Of the few avian influenza viruses that have crossed the species barrier to infect humans, H5N1 has caused the largest number of detected cases of severe disease and death in humans. In the current outbreaks in Asia and Europe, more than half of those infected with the virus have died. Most cases have occurred in previously healthy children and young adults. However, it is possible that the only cases currently being reported are those in the most severely ill people, and that the full range of illness caused by the H5N1 virus has not yet been defined.

Federal News Continued

So far, the spread of H5N1 virus from person to person has been rare and has not continued beyond one person. Nonetheless, because all influenza viruses have the ability to change, scientists are concerned that H5N1 virus one day could be able to infect humans and spread easily from one person to another. Because these viruses do not commonly infect humans, there is little or no immune protection against them in the human population. If H5N1 virus were to gain the capacity to spread easily from person to person, an influenza pandemic (worldwide outbreak of disease) could begin. For more information about influenza pandemics, see http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/ and http://www.pandemicflu.gov .

No one can predict when a pandemic might occur. However, experts from around the world are watching the H5N1 situation in Asia and Europe very closely and are preparing for the possibility that the virus may begin to spread more easily and widely from person to person.

Treatment and vaccination for H5N1 virus in humans

The H5N1 virus that has caused human illness and death in Asia is resistant to amantadine and rimantadine, two antiviral medications commonly used for influenza. Two other antiviral medications, oseltamavir and zanamavir, would probably work to treat influenza caused by H5N1 virus, but additional studies still need to be done to demonstrate their effectiveness.

There currently is no commercially available vaccine to protect humans against H5N1 virus that is being seen in Asia and Europe. However, vaccine development efforts are taking place. Research studies to test a vaccine to protect humans against H5N1 virus began in April 2005, and a series of clinical trials is under way. For more information about H5N1 vaccine development process, visit the National Institutes of Health website

This fact sheet provides general information about avian influenza (bird flu) and information about one type of bird flu, called avian influenza A (H5N1), that has caused infections in birds in Asia and Europe and in humans in Asia . Also see *Questions and Answers* on the CDC website and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the World Health Organization (WHO) website.

USDA and HHS Agencies to Hold Public Meeting on the Jurisdiction of Certain Food Categories

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), in the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), have jointly announced a public meeting to discuss and solicit public comment on a consistent regulatory approach concerning the jurisdiction over certain food products that contain meat and poultry. The meeting will be held December 15, 2005, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 North River Road, Rosemont, IL.

By law, FSIS has authority over meat and poultry products. FDA has authority over all foods not under FSIS' jurisdiction. As the principal regulators, FSIS and FDA formed a working group to

examine jurisdictional issues for food categories that contain meat and poultry ingredients. The group concluded that past decisions involving certain product categories are no longer consistent, largely due to marketplace changes. For example, FSIS regulates corn dogs, while FDA regulates bagel dogs.

FSIS and FDA are holding the public meeting to invite public input on the approach recommended by the working group, and to help determine what, if any, administrative, operational, marketing, or labeling costs may be associated with the contemplated regulatory changes. Those interested in attending the public meeting can register online or by faxing registration information (including name, title, firm name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and fax number) to 301-436-2605 at least 5 working days prior to the public meeting.

FSIS and FDA are also accepting public comments on the Federal Register notice containing the working group's recommendations. Comments may be submitted to Docket No. 05-013N, as indicated in the Federal Register notice available online.

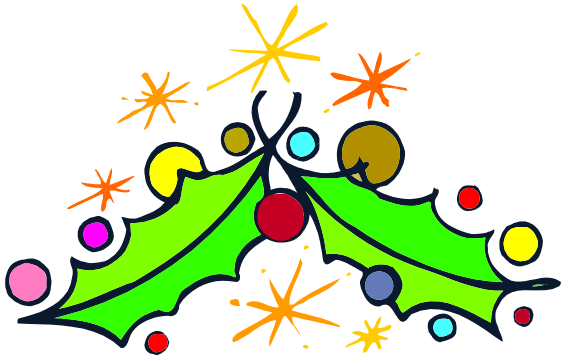
Reminder:

Register your email with CASA at http://www.casafdo.org/. So you can receive your CASA Association announcements and information.

Information, forms and activities will be provided on the website not mailed.

Routine electronic communication online at the CASA website will include:

- Scholarship information
- Annual conference information
- Membership renewals
- Newsletters
- Training Announcements
- Job Opportunities
- Encourage non-CASA members to register as well so they can be informed of CASA activities and announcements.



Noteworthy News Continued

Pennsylvania Advances Food Safety, Implements New Inspection And Reporting System

November 17, 2005

HARRISBURG - Pennsylvania is investing $600,000 to replace an antiquated food inspection process with a new web-based system that will give consumers online access to food inspection reports.

The Department of Agriculture today announced the planned implementation of the Garrison Enterprises Digital Health Department System, a system that will allow consumers to look at the state's restaurant inspection reports online. Implementation of the system is planned for December and is a part of Agriculture's ongoing overall food safety mission.

"By using the Garrison System our inspectors will be able to complete their inspections more quickly, efficiently and accurately," said Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff. "They will also be better able to detect potential food hazards and ensure consumer safety.

"We know that people are looking to us to make sure that food is handled safely and properly, and the Department is doing everything it can to make sure the state's food supply is wholesome and safe. Food safety remains a top priority for the Department."

In addition to the adoption of the Garrison System, the Department has changed internal processes including risk-based reporting, employee health monitoring and other modern food safety advancements. The Department is proposing amendments to the 60-year old Public Eating and Drinking Places Law, Act 369, to better reflect current business practices and the Pennsylvania Food Code.

"Although it is just one item on the overall food safety menu, Act 369 is a concern for the Department and the food industry alike," said Wolff. "The act does not take into consideration the advances we've made in food safety through modern science, or the changes to Federal Food and Drug Administration guidelines like those written into the state's Food Code."

Pennsylvania made public safety advances in 2004 with the creation of the Food Employees Certification Law, which requires all food establishments that handle potentially hazardous food to have at least one manager certified in safe food handling. To date, nearly 32,000 food establishment employees have been trained under this law.

"All of these advances ensure that individuals involved in food preparation and delivery are properly educated about Pennsylvania's food safety laws and regulations," said Wolff. "We're going to continue to concentrate on these areas as the primary source of promoting food safety. Inspections are just a snapshot of conditions at that time, while good food safety knowledge and practices can be encouraged continuously."

Currently, the Department of Agriculture inspects 22,000 eating and drinking establishments annually.

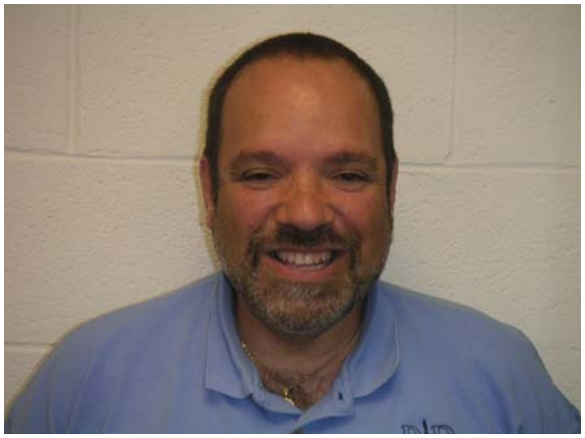
"Pennsylvania's food supply is among the safest in the world," said Wolff. "We will continue to maintain an accurate inspection and licensing process, ensuring that Pennsylvanians are eating safe and healthy food."

Wolff made his comments as part of an announcement made by the Auditor General on the Department's food inspection process.

For more information about the state Department of Agriculture's initiatives, visit: http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/agriculture/site/default.asp.

Local News

Member's Profile: Bernard Finkel



Have you met Bernie Finkel ? He is usually the person you respond to for the holiday meeting lunches. Well Bernie has been a CASA member since 1976. He has served as Secretary/Treasurer, Education Committee Chair, and is the current Vice-President of the Philadelphia Conference.

He has been employed with the Philadelphia Health Department for 30 years as a Sanitarian and a Sanitarian Supervisor. He has a B.A. in Biology from University of Pennsylvania.

Bernie and his wife Sue are the proud parents of the "three J's"- their three sons.

JOB ANNOUNCEMNT

The New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services is seeking an Environmental Scientist 1 in the Food and Drug Safety Program.

Working in cooperation with the Retail Food Project Coordinator; responsibilities include: The administration and management of Memorandums of Agreement. The MOA's cover the inspection of retail food facilities, employee training and new facility plan review. Location of the retail facilities include: the New Jersey Turnpike, Garden State Parkway and various other facilities on State properties. Working in tandem with the Retail Food Coordinator to introduce, promote and educate local health officials on the new Chapter 12 (retail food) requirements. Becoming a Standardized Retail Food Specialist as prescribed by the FDA. Coordinate and implement an outreach and education initiative in food safety education. Participate in food defense activities especially as they relate to retail food. Development and implementation of the Best Practices in Retail Food Protection Programs. The ability to assess food safety aspects of complex retail food equipment. Complete Retail Food inspection activity and supervision of inspection teams. Applicant must have a strong interest in food safety, excellent communication skills, and the ability to conduct individual and group training programs. Educational/licensing requirements include: graduation from an accredited college or university with a Master's Degree, valid Health Officer and Registered Environmental Health Specialist licenses issued by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services. Interested applicants may contact Richard Ritota, Program Manager, Consumer & Environmental Health Services, PO Box 369, Trenton, NJ 08625-0369, 609-588-7483. Salary commensurate with experience.

From the Editor

The Holiday Season is upon us and before you know it we will have eaten the Christmas Cookies and watched the "apple" fall and bring us into the New Year. As you know we are trying 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. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Tentative Schedule of Meetings

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 !