



THE FLASH!

*Alaska, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Guam
Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming*

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Summer 1999

Message From The President

“THE BEST OF THE WEST” is just around the corner. The planning committee has finished their contributions in setting the agenda and the registration materials have been mailed for the 1999 WAFDO Annual Conference. You should all have the information by the time you read this edition of the WAFDO FLASH! Attendance at the conference is the one time members are able to get updated on food, drug and device issues happening nationally as well as close to home. The networking opportunities with counterparts and other contacts are endless. If you still need conference information, please let me know.

DON'T FORGET TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SILENT AUCTION!

I would like to let the membership know that this year, as President has been a great learning experience. The Board of Directors as well as other individuals have contributed greatly in the last year. I know there is more WAFDO members could be doing in conjunction with AFDO as well as regenerating committee activity within the WAFDO organization. This will be further discussed during the September conference. This year WAFDO's accomplishments are the continued success of the Seafood HACCP Alliance and the two resolutions, which were submitted by WAFDO to AFDO and passed. You will find the specifics of these two resolutions in this newsletter.

The WAFDO Board of Directors meets on a monthly basis to discuss member issues, respond to requests from AFDO, and work on the arrangements for the annual conference. Since one unique feature of WAFDO is that we are so spread out geographically, the meetings are done by telephone conferencing. The FDA Denver District office has been the key to setting up these monthly calls with the help of Virlie Walker. The Board would be definitely at a loss for words without your help Virlie, “Thank You.”

This is the last edition of the WAFDO FLASH! that will be written during my Presidency. I would like to recognize Candace Jacobs as doing a fantastic job in pulling this year's issues of the FLASH! together. It takes a lot of hustle and bustle to get people to contribute information and then to put it all together into a final product. KUDOS to you Candace!

Keeping the Seafood HACCP Alliance educational projects alive as well as the new Seafood HACCP Encore classes always takes extra effort and initiative. Maurice Tamura I can't thank you enough for your dedication to this project. Maurice has also gotten help in keeping things a float from one of our dedicated California members, Chris Wogee. Contributions from people like Maurice and Chris keep WAFDO alive and kicking educationally as well as financially.

President's Message continued

WAFDO's board members have been a joy to work with during the last year. Everyone is extremely active with their "real jobs" and to take the time to participate in WAFDO activities needs recognition. These people are Cory Willis, John Vodneck, Bud Anderson, Jim Waddell, and Mike Govro. I look forward to seeing all of you face to face verses the monthly conference calls we have all actively participated in. YOU'RE THE BEST.

Once again, I hope you are all able to come to this year's conference and enjoy the wonderful State of Colorado while you are here.

Sincerely,

Patricia Klocker

**The FLASH!
Publication Schedule**

Articles Due at WSDA	The FLASH! Publication Date
October 30, 1999	November 20, 1999
January 30, 2000	February 20, 2000
April 30, 2000	May 20, 2000
July 30, 2000	August 20, 2000

Please send graphics too!

Summer '99 FLASH! Highlights

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***Claudia Coles Receives
Commissioner's Special
Citation Award***

Dr. Jane E. Henney, Commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration presented the Commissioner's Special Citation award to Claudia Coles, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture, Assistant Food Safety Compliance Program Manager, for recognition of Claudia's consistent leadership in food safety, seafood HACCP training activities, active leadership in IMS conference committees and promoting State and Federal partnerships.

Way to go Claudia!

Letter from the Editor

A Report on the AFDO Conference—

The AFDO organization did a superb job of putting on the 1999 Annual AFDO Conference in San Antonio, Texas. This was one of the largest conferences with a record number of attendees. It was a great experience! For those of you who didn't make it to the AFDO conference, Mike Donovan captured some great photos of the local scenery and we've included a few shots in this edition of the FLASH!

While at the AFDO conference, we circulated some extra copies of the Spring '99 WAFDO FLASH! and we received some positive feedback from people. Many thanks to everyone who helps disseminate cutting-edge food and drug regulatory news by submitting articles for the FLASH! We couldn't do it without you!

One very noticeable dynamic that I observed at the AFDO conference was that WAFDO seemed under-represented. Only two WAFDO members are on the AFDO Board: Stu Richardson as Director At Large and Patricia Klocker as WAFDO President. And no WAFDO members were recipients of any 1999 AFDO awards.

The WAFDO board has discussed this situation on a few of the recent telephone conference calls. We want to pursue some strategies to increase the presence of WAFDO members in the AFDO organization.

Please bring your ideas to the September 1999 WAFDO Conference in Denver.

Sincerely,

Candace Jacobs, DVM, MPH

**After 36 years with FDA,
Roger Lowell, Seattle District Director,
retires on July 31, 1999.**

Submitted by Sue Hutchcroft, FDA



*Mike Govro takes a break from the AFDO Conference
in the Alamo Courtyard.*

Roger began his FDA career after serving in the Army. His FDA days began as an Investigator in Minneapolis District in 1963. He was promoted to a position as the Resident In Charge of the Helena, Montana Resident Post in 1967. Having a resident in Montana opened up a lot of work for FDA in that area. In 1971, he transferred to the Seattle District Office as an Investigator. In 1972, he moved to the Buffalo, New York District Office and became a Supervisory Investigator. In 1974, it was time to come back out West. Roger transferred to the Portland, Oregon Resident Post as a Supervisory Investigator. In 1981, Roger moved south and became the DIB in Los Angeles District. The great Pacific Northwest called Roger again and in 1987, Roger became the District Director of Seattle District and has greatly enjoyed that position ever since.

It will be hard to say goodbye to Roger, especially for those who have worked with him throughout his career with FDA. Roger has been very active in FDA and he will be missed. As many of you know, Roger is an avid bicyclist and skier and his immediate plans after retirement are to ride his bike from Seattle to Maine. That will be quite the ride!



Send Your Thoughts and Wishes to J. Jos Campioni

The WAFDO Board was saddened to learn that J. Jos Campioni has been diagnosed with Myelo-dysplastic Syndrome. This disease affects the bone marrow and it can degenerate rapidly to acute Leukemia. Jos retired in September 1998 as Manager of the British Columbia Lower Mainland District Office, Canadian Food Inspection Agency. He earned his Food Science Degree from the University of British Columbia in 1964 at which time he joined the agency (formerly known as Food and Drug of Health Canada).

Jos devoted his entire career to food safety where he worked at the Vancouver, BC district office for 34 years. Jos reported to Maurice Tamura that he has some good days and some bad days and that he has received a lot of support from his friends.

You may send your thoughts, wishes and support to:

J. Jos Campioni
2649 Sechelt Drive
N. Vancouver, BC V7H1N9
Phone: 604-929-2407
Email: Jos_Campioni@bc.sympatico.ca

Sue Hutchcroft will be putting together a book of letters from those of you who would like to send him well wishes and memories. You can send your letters to the attention of Pat Costa, FDA Seattle District, 22201 23rd Dr. SE, Bothell, Washington 98021-4421. Emails can also be sent to Sue at shutchcr@ora.fda.gov and will be added to the book.

Outbreak of Salmonella Muenchen Infections Linked to Unpasteurized Orange Juice

During June 1999, Public Health-Seattle and King County (PHSKC), the Washington State Health Department and the Oregon Health Division independently investigated clusters of diarrheal illness attributed to Salmonella serotype Muenchen infections in each state. Both clusters were associated with a commercially distributed unpasteurized orange juice traced to a single processor, which distributes widely in the US. As of July 13, a total of 207 confirmed cases associated with this outbreak have been reported by 15 states and two Canadian provinces; an additional 91 cases of *S. Muenchen* infection reported since June 1 are under investigation.

Epidemiological investigations connect S. Muenchen to Juice Processor

Based on epidemiological information from investigations in Washington and Oregon as well as discussions with the Food and Drug Administration, Sun Orchard voluntarily issued a recall on June 25. Unpasteurized orange juice produced by Sun Orchard is distributed to Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia under the brand names Aloha, Earl and Joey's Tomatoes, Markon, Sysco, Trader Joe's, Voila, and Zupan. Other states and provinces received these products through secondary distribution. The juice was distributed to hotels, restaurants, and supermarkets, and was served in individual glasses as "fresh-squeezed" juice in hotels and restaurants. In addition, a frozen form of the unpasteurized juice was sold under the brand name Vareva for use in restaurants and institutions.

On June 28, samples from a previously unopened container of unpasteurized Sun Orchard orange juice was analyzed at an FDA laboratory and the Washington State Public Health Laboratory yielded *S. Muenchen*; samples from the smoothie blender and juice dispenser at an outlet Restaurant A analyzed by the Washington State Public Health Laboratory yielded Salmonella serogroup C2. Isolates from both sources had a PFGE pattern that was indistinguishable from strains isolated from patients. Subsequently, orange juice collected from the Sun Orchard factory, cultured in an FDA laboratory and serotyped by the California State Public Health Laboratory, yielded *S.* serotype Javiana, *S.* serotype Gaminara, *S.* serotype Hidalgo, and *S.* serotype Alamo in addition to *S. Muenchen*.

FDA issues border alert on trucks from Mexican supplier.

S. Muenchen is one of approximately 2400 Salmonella serotypes that can cause illness in humans. Salmonella infection typically causes gastroenteritis characterized by diarrhea, abdominal cramps, fever, and dehydration. Bacteremia, meningitis, osteomyelitis, and abscesses also can occur. Each year in the US, 800,000 to 4 million Salmonella infections result in approximately 500 deaths. *S. Muenchen* is an infrequently isolated serotype, accounting for approximately 1.6% of human Salmonella isolates reported in 1997 to the Public Health Laboratory Information System.

The FDA Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) regulation for juice products (21 CFR, Part 120) requires juice to be produced using methods such as pasteurization or an equivalent process to ensure that pathogenic microorganisms are destroyed. Sun Orchard had a HACCP plan and investigations are underway to determine where these control measures failed and how the juice became contaminated. On July 16, FDA initiated an import alert after a sample pulled from one of the supplier's trucks entering the US from Mexico showed positive for *S. Muenchen*. Trucks from this Mexican produce supplier are being detained at the border where the product must successfully pass five tests before the trucks are allowed to enter the US.

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AFDO Approves Resolutions Submitted by WAFDO

Resolution Number 99-04

Date: May 5, 1999

Concerning: USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service, In-Distribution Inspection Pilot Project

Whereas, FDA and USDA have initiated a process to develop and implement a National Food Safety System and

Whereas, WAFDO fully supports and is participating in the development and implementation of a National Food Safety System which includes one of coordination and uniformity through all levels of government resulting in the elimination of duplicative efforts and improved utilization of all current dedicated food safety resources and

Whereas, USDA has announced they will be sending federal employees into retail food establishments to conduct food safety activities and

Whereas, food safety activities within retail food stores have traditionally been conducted by State and local regulatory officials therefore, be it

Resolved, that WAFDO ask AFDO to formally request USDA/FSIS to coordinate, and where appropriate, integrate with state and local agency regulatory activities within retail food establishments and be it further:

Resolved, that WAFDO ask AFDO to request USDA/FSIS to integrate their resources utilized in retail food establishments with state agencies to assist those agencies in their retail food activities which includes addressing USDA/FSIS food safety concerns, be it further:

Resolved, that AFDO request a meeting with USDA/FSIS to begin this process.

Resolution Number 99-05

Date: May 5, 1999

Concerning: Personal Care Products Industry

Whereas, the personal care products industry has grown to a multi billion-dollar industry that is currently not regulated, therefore be it

Resolved, that AFDO and its affiliates include this industry in developing guidelines and training programs to promote the uniform regulations of this industry.

Diet Drug Trial

A Texas woman who suffered heart-valve damage won a \$23 million jury award today in the first verdict involving the diet-drug combination fen-phen. Debbie Lovett, 36, blamed American Home Products and subsidiary Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories for damage she claimed to have suffered after taking the drugs for more than three months starting in October 1995.

The jury deliberated Wednesday, deep into the night Thursday and about two hours today. Jurors determined the company was fully liable for Ms. Lovett's injuries. More than 3,100 fen-phen cases have been filed across the nation, but Ms. Lovett's lawsuit in Van Zandt County was the first to end in a jury verdict. Other cases are pending and some were settled, including several settled after a trial began.

Source: Mike Finger, Associated Press, August 6, 1999

Alaska Editorial

Food Safety: Is it Worth the Risk?

by Janice Adair, Director of the Department of Environmental Conservation's Division of Environmental Health

The budget axe fell hard on the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Food Safety programs. At the same time, the Legislature told us to raise our fees. The result? A reduction in the state's food safety efforts and an increased risk to public health. Less service, higher costs.

The DEC's Environmental Health Officers inspect every restaurant, seafood processor, water bottler, grocery store, and similar operation throughout the state, except within the Municipality of Anchorage. Those same folks also work with public businesses such as pools, spas, day care centers and schools to ensure they are kept clean and sanitary.

It's difficult for businesses to keep on top of the changing world of food safety and sanitation. Inspections provide the opportunity for us to share information with businesses and provide one-on-one assistance and education.

Many of you may remember the 1993 *E. coli* outbreak in Washington that sickened hundreds and killed 4 children. What most people don't know is before that outbreak, it was not widely known undercooked hamburgers could cause this illness. Proper cooking and holding temperatures to inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria is the type of information our Environmental Health Officers share during an inspection.

An Environmental Health Officer also looks for the conditions that can cause foodborne illness. We work with operators to identify food safety hazards and what can be done to control them. We ensure the business's employees are following

proper hygienic practices. We check that the food comes from an approved source, and that it is protected from contamination.

We look at the equipment and utensils to ensure they are regularly cleaned and sanitized. We check the water supply and wastewater disposal if the business is not in an area with municipal services. We also look at the physical layout to ensure pests and rodents are kept out and sufficient lighting is provided for employees to see areas that need to be kept clean.

We investigate complaints. Confirming a business is not the source of an illness can be just as important as confirming it is. We also participate in recalls, getting the word out to businesses, and helping to remove the recalled food from stores.

And of course, we take enforcement actions when problems have not been or cannot be fixed. We have found individuals trying to sell shellfish that had not been tested for PSP. We have found raw sewage inches deep on the floor of a commercial kitchen. We have found chickens being thawed at room temperature.

Twenty-nine Environmental Health Officers in eleven offices used to provide these services for the nearly 9,000 food and public facilities around the state. But, as a result of the \$339,000 cut from the FY 00 budget, and an equal amount lost of federal funds, we will have 2 fewer offices (Tok and Dutch Harbor will both be closed) and 7 fewer inspectors.

The consequence? We will no longer plan to routinely inspect those types of food operations or public facilities that present a relatively lower risk to public health - places like convenience stores, bars or taverns, grocery stores, most warehouses, or food operations with a limited offering.

Not only will service to communities around Alaska be reduced or eliminated, but the cost to individual business owners will be increased. Annual fees will more than double. For example, an average bakery that previously paid \$125.00 for a yearly fee will now pay \$305.00, and the owner of a medium-sized restaurant will see his cost rise from \$185.00 per year to \$440.00.

We've also notified the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that the state will no longer run the meat-processing program - a program the Anchorage Daily News called a national leader in a 1996 editorial. As of August 1, the USDA will oversee commercial meat slaughter and processing in Alaska.

Alaska's seafood processing program — also considered a national leader by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration - will be another casualty. Alaska's program was the model used to develop the federal program that became effective in 1997. Now, fresh or frozen seafood processors will likely only be inspected if the plant also includes a higher risk type of processing.

We will continue to inspect restaurants, seafood smokers and canners, and other relatively higher-risk facilities for the time being but less often than we have in the past. As these types of businesses continue to grow, our ability to juggle will be compromised. So we put together a Food Safety Advisory Committee

with representatives of the public and various food businesses from around the state. The advisory committee will help us restructure the program and find credible alternatives for delivering needed services to the maximum extent possible.

Ensuring a safe food supply is not something individuals can do for themselves by themselves. Safe food requires a partnership between industry, government, and the consuming public. In Alaska, that partnership has been crippled.

California News

Sprout Industry Training Video

Submitted by Jim Waddell

The Food and Drug Branch (FDB) and FDA are jointly developing a training video for the sprout industry. The video will be used to provide sprout safety training to owners, managers, and employees of sprout operations nationwide to reduce the risk of contamination, and resulting foodborne illnesses. To facilitate development of the course, FDB convened a panel of experts from academia, industry and within FDA and FDB. The training video will use as a basis the training materials developed by FDB for training courses presented to sprouters here in California.

Sprout Firm Legal Action

Submitted by Jim Waddell

The San Francisco District Attorney's office has filed a civil lawsuit against a Bay Area sprouter. The lawsuit is based upon an FDB investigation of the processor and supporting statements prepared by science staff of the risk of eating sprouts contaminated with pathogenic bacteria coming from bird feces, rodents, and insanitary conditions. Currently, the firm is operating under sprout sanitation and product sampling requirements specified in a judge's order as a result of a Temporary Restraining Order requested by FDB. A hearing for a preliminary injunction to maintain the firm's compliance until a permanent settlement can be completed was conducted on July 15.

The FDB is identifying controls and sampling requirements for the preliminary injunction that the firm must maintain to ensure food safety. The firm has made considerable progress in eliminating the violations noted in FDB inspections. The most serious ones such as contamination of food contact surface with pigeon feces, rodent infestation, inadequate sanitation of the food process machinery and containers, lack of sanitizing of the sprout seed, and inadequate employee hygiene appear to have been corrected. FDB is monitoring conditions and lab results to ensure public health safety.

Embargo Of Dietary Supplement

Submitted by Jim Waddell

FDB embargoed \$25,410 worth [9,240 bottles (16 oz.)] and \$5,750 worth [1,150 bottles (64oz)] of Gecor's Kombucha Tea, whose labels and newspaper ads carried curative claims for cancer, immune system, cataracts, bronchitis and kidney problems. Product brochures and newspaper ads were widely distributed in the Los Angeles area. The product was sold as a dietary supplement. Preliminary tests show pH at 2.4, eliminating concerns for pathogens. Additional testing was conducted for molds, yeast and undeclared alcohol content (detected from the fermented odor of the product). The firm voluntarily recalled all distributed products from 500 locations and will be relabeling the products without the curative claims. The firm is currently in the process of validating their flash pasteurization process with Michelson's Laboratories.

Colorado News

Human Plague

Submitted by Roberta Boitano

Two cases of human plague in Colorado are under investigation by local, state and federal officials. A fatal plague case involving a Larimer county female was investigated by the Centers for Disease Control and Larimer County Health Department personnel over the Memorial Day weekend. Although primary septicemic plague was diagnosed, there was some concern that secondary pneumonic plague might have also been involved since chest x-rays noted minor, unremarkable right lung infiltrates. As a precautionary measure, all individuals who had close contact with the patient after onset were administered antibiotic prophylaxis.

Investigation of the case found that the patient and her husband maintained twenty to thirty dogs and cats on the site and that several of the structures were infested with rodents. At present, two cats and a dog were found to have titers for plague. In addition, a captured deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), and a flea were also found positive for plague. There was no apparent evidence of a rodent die-off noted in the area, which consisted primarily of ground squirrels, chipmunks and small rodent species.

The second case in early June involved a Fremont county resident who was also diagnosed as positive for primary septicemic plague and also exhibited possible pulmonary involvement. Health care personnel, friends and family who came within two meters of the patient were also administered post exposure prophylaxis. Investigation of the case found no apparent rodent epizootic; however, laboratory analysis of captured rodent and dog sera and flea specimens are currently being run at CDC.

Denver Responds To Newspaper Coverage

Submitted by Roberta Boitano

Following exposure in Los Angeles and Chicago, Denver restaurants and food regulatory programs were placed under a media microscope. As a result of the publicity, Denver Department of Environmental Health has convened a panel to examine several options for enforcement.

In addition to action by the Denver Department of Environmental Health, the Colorado Restaurant Association (CRA) responded to the media in the May issue of Restaurant News of the Rockies stating that the ultimate decision for the health department is, compliance or closure. Obviously, if compliance is unattainable for any reason, the only choice is closure.

However, if compliance with the code can be attained in a reasonable and safe period of time, that should be the goal. CRA also announced plans to form the Colorado Food Safety Council in the next several months. Made up of restaurant industry, food preparation professionals, sanitation experts, health department officials, equipment manufacturers and officials from other regulatory agencies, the council's purpose will be to combat foodborne illness in Colorado. The Association also expressed opposition to posting of routine inspections unless they continue to have repeated problems at the same restaurant.

This occurred shortly after a similar media campaign targeted the food safety program in effect in Chicago. The city of Chicago is proposing more strict enforcement of health violations. Mayor Richard Daley has proposed increasing inspection frequency, closure of restaurants with repeated violations and posting of inspections, among other suggestions.



Mission Concepcion, circa 1680 is located just south of San Antonio and still hold services.

Salmonella Investigations

Submitted by Roberta Boitano

A multi-disciplinary team from several states investigated a spike in the number of *Salmonella typhimurium* cases and identified clover sprouts from Valley Farms in Arvada and Rainbow Sprouts in Grand Junction to be associated with the outbreak. The firms recalled the last production runs on Friday, May 28. Since January 1, 1999, one hundred thirty-seven (137) cases of salmonella were confirmed compared to thirty-eight (38) during the first five months of 1998. Of the one hundred thirty-seven, seventy-nine were found to have identical DNA fingerprints. The suspected source of contamination is thought to involve a lot of seeds used for sprouting.



Riverwalk in the heart of downtown San Antonio

CDP Receives Hammer Award

Submitted by Roberta Boitano

The Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Consumer Protection Division (CDPHE-CPD) received Vice President Al Gore's Hammer Award at the National Conference of Interstate Milk Shippers meeting in Atlanta, GA on May 3. This award, which represents building a government that works better and costs less, was presented to Colorado as part of a partnership agreement with FDA's Southwest Region. Through this partnership agreement, CDPHE-CPD conducts inspections, collects samples and investigates complaints involving manufactured dairy products such as ice cream, cheeses and frozen desserts, thus eliminating a duplication of these regulatory activities at the federal level.

Hawaii News

Carbon Monoxide-treated Fish

Submitted by Maurice Tamura

Last December, the local media created quite a controversy when they reported that some imported tuna were being treated with carbon monoxide to preserve or enhance the red color of the fish. The local fishing industry, which was worried about losing market share to the imported fish, alleged that the treatment was being used to mask poor quality fish. Consumers became upset when they heard this because tuna is used for sashimi, and consumers expect their sashimi to be made from fresh, high-quality fish. As a result of these concerns, the Food and Drug Branch (FDB) queried FDA about the treatment.

Recently, FDA issued an import bulletin which helps to clarify the status of carbon monoxide (a.k.a. "tasteless smoke") as a food additive and the labeling requirements for treated fish products. At this time, FDA will not take legal action against fish treated with carbon monoxide (CO) or tasteless smoke (TS) unless FDA finds the fish to be unfit for food (e.g., decomposed or has high levels of histamines). However, the fish must be labeled as having been treated with CO or TS.

After receiving the import bulletin, FDB notified seafood distributors and retail stores to label CO or TS-treated fish and fish products as described in the bulletin. This notice also applies to treated fish and fish products that are not in package form, for example, unwrapped fish fillets in the refrigerated display cases or retail stores. The unwrapped products must be accompanied by a counter card, sign or other appropriate device disclosing the treatment.

We would like to see this notice extended to restaurants, but restaurants fall under the review of another branch of the Department of Health. That office has asked the Attorney General whether the Department has the authority to require restaurants to provide the notice. A legal opinion is pending.

The FDA's import bulletin did not satisfy the local fishing industry, and it is urging FDA to ban the importation of the treated fish and fish products.



Heptachlor Epoxide Found in Cucumbers

Submitted by Maurice Tamura

In a press release, the Hawaii Department of Health, Food and Drug Branch (FDB) reported that low levels of heptachlor epoxide were found in some cucumbers that were grown on former pineapple and sugarcane fields in Hawaii. Heptachlor was used for controlling soil insects and ants in the US between 1952 and 1993. In Hawaii, it was used primarily for termite treatment in urban areas and ant control in pineapple fields and in some sugarcane fields. Heptachlor breaks down to heptachlor epoxide in the environment and can persist in soil for decades.

While the levels of heptachlor epoxide found in the cucumber samples posed no significant health risk, heptachlor epoxide is of particular interest in Hawaii. In 1982 FDB discovered the pesticide in our milk supply, and the incident became known as the worst food contamination episode in Hawaii's history. Cows were exposed to heptachlor while they were being fed "green chop," which consisted primarily of the leafy portion of the pineapple plant.

The FDB's recent findings are compatible with a study, conducted in 1996 by the Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station and the Food Division of the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, which indicated that cucurbits can incorporate organochlorines such as heptachlor epoxide from the soil. This phenomenon may impede Hawaii's effort to diversify its agricultural industry by limiting the types of crops that can be grown on former sugarcane and pineapple fields. Sugarcane and pineapple have been Hawaii's principal crops for decades, but demand and profits have been waning and the State has been looking for replacement crops to export.

Based on the small number of samples analyzed thus far, it appears that heptachlor epoxide is found primarily on the surface and rind of the cucumber and that washing reduces its concentration. Removing the peel will further reduce the residues. Consumers were reminded to wash their fruits and vegetables before consumption. FDB is continuing to test cucurbits that are grown on former sugarcane and pineapple fields.



Oregon News

Food Code Adoption

Submitted by Mike Govro

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Oregon Health Division (OHD) are beginning to lay the groundwork for the adoption of the Federal Food Code. The two agencies are forming a committee to determine where the code varies from current state regulations, discuss what the changes would mean to the industry and regulators, and recommend adoption of sections where there is majority agreement. The committee will be comprised of ODA and OHD representatives, a representative of county health departments, retail and food service industry representatives, and a consumer representative. This process is modeled after the process that was used successfully by the State of Arizona.

The agencies hope that this process will familiarize all parties with the details of the code and produce a consensus before beginning the rulemaking process. The goal is to finish the review process prior to the deadline for submission of legislative concepts in the fall of 2000.

Legislative Update

Submitted by Mike Govro

Several changes took place in the 1999 legislative session that will affect the Food Safety Division. The Dairy Law was rewritten, mostly to modernize language and to remove the archaic sections of this 1950s law. In the process, the legislature removed requirements for licensing of retail frozen dessert manufacturers and the bacterial standards for these products.

The Dairy Farmers of Oregon introduced a bill to ban the sale of raw cow's milk to the public. The Department of Agriculture had attempted to pass a raw milk ban in three previous sessions, but was unsuccessful. The State's last raw cow's milk producer-distributor discontinued jugging raw milk last spring, making passage of the ban politically feasible. The bill contains an exemption for people with three or fewer cows (two lactating) to sell raw milk to the final consumer. The bill does not ban the sale of raw goat's milk.

For a while, passage of the raw milk ban was jeopardized when it was bundled with a bill to form a dairy compact. When it was clear that the dairy compact bill would fail, the two bills were separated and the raw milk ban was passed.

In the budgeting process, the Department of Agriculture's general fund allocation was reduced by four percent. The Food Safety Division does not expect this cut to affect staffing levels.

Washington News

News media helps Food Safety Program protect public health



Susan Sorg, a microbiologist at the Tumwater lab, detected Salmonella in a Country Charm ice cream sample provided by the Food Safety Program.

The headline **“Ice cream products recalled!”** appeared in newspapers throughout four Washington counties.

“Country Charm chocolate ice cream has been recalled because it could be contaminated with *Salmonella*,” said the TV news anchor as photos of the ice cream floated across the screen. The story went on to describe the product being recalled, where it had been distributed, and the follow-up work planned by food safety officers.

“The *Salmonella* was detected through routine testing by the state Department of Agriculture,” concluded the anchor. “There have been no illnesses.” The stories were exactly what the Food Safety Program wanted.

“We rely on the media to give consumers the information they need to protect themselves, and to educate them on the roles our agency plays to detect and prevent consumption of bacteria that could cause human illness,” said Claudia Coles, assistant food safety program manager.

“The Country Charm story was no less important because no one got sick,” said Mary Evitt, staff writer at the *Skagit Valley Herald*. “Certainly it was too early to know in the beginning if anyone would step forward to claim they had become ill. But, widespread news coverage increases the chances that people will dispose of a product, or take it back to the store before they do get sick.”

The headlines, while most relevant to the public, do not adequately describe the hard work that goes on every day in the Food Safety section or the Microbiology Lab in Tumwater. Among their other duties, Food Safety inspectors routinely collect samples of processed foods for testing by Microbiology Lab staff. On average, 10 to 12 products are tested every week for *Salmonella*, *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Listeria*. Less than 1 percent test positive for these pathogenic bacteria.

Country Charm began its recall July 16 after Susan Sorg, a microbiologist at the Tumwater Lab, detected *Salmonella* in its chocolate ice cream. “I feel very satisfied,” said Sorg. “So often we learn about contamination after the fact. In this case, our sampling and testing program enabled us to identify a hazard before people got sick. We protected public health and safety. And, frankly, that’s why I work here.”

Country Charm was distributed in Island, Snohomish, Skagit and north King counties. The packages had no code numbers or expiration dates, so the dairy was required to recall all of the chocolate ice cream in distribution. Food Safety inspectors – Claudia Coles, Roger Beekman, Keren LaCourse, Les Boian and Scott Fox – visited the dairy several times. They collected samples of the ingredients that went into the chocolate ice cream, observed production techniques and employee traffic for potential sources of contamination, and examined equipment for malfunctions. Ultimately, they did not find the source of the contamination.

Source: WSDA Ag Briefs, July 30, 1999

Team Presents Safe Production and Handling of Fresh Cheeses Course

The Pacific Region of the FDA, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the UC Davis Dairy Research and Information Center teamed together to sponsor a course on safe production and handling of fresh cheeses in Vancouver, Washington on August 18-19. The course

covered all aspects involved in the safe production and handling of fresh cheeses, from processing to the retail store. The discussions covered regulatory issues, cleaning and sanitation, GMPs, retail and plant HACCP plans, processing equipment design. The course was available for dairy food industry (processors, distributors, and retailers) as well as food / dairy regulatory agencies.

Governor Locke Recognizes Queso Fresco Task Force

The Governing For Results 6: An updated progress report on how state agencies are improving the quality, service and efficiency of state government (April 1999) acknowledged the results achieved by the Queso Fresco Multi-Agency Task Force.

Queso Fresco is a traditional soft white Mexican cheese produced usually from untreated animal gut and raw, unpasteurized milk. It is illegal to offer Queso Fresco for sale using traditional manufacturing methods or for uninspected raw milk to be sold or given to others for any purpose.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) identified Queso Fresco as the source of several major outbreaks of antibiotic resistant forms of Salmonella in the Yakima Valley. A task force of the CDC, the Yakima County Health District, Washington State University (WSU), WSU Cooperative extension, the Washington State Department of Agriculture and a number of local community agencies collaborated to come up with creative solutions to provide safer homemade Queso Fresco and eliminate the illegal supply. The WSU and WSU Cooperative Extension enlisted the help of "Abuelas" (grandmothers) to help educate the Hispanic community to use safe ingredients when making Queso Fresco.

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Unpasteurized Juice

The FDA published a final rule that requires the labeling of untreated fruit and vegetable juices with a warning statement to advise consumers of the risks associated with drinking untreated juices (21 CFR, Part 101). These labeling requirements do not apply to unpackaged juice or unpackaged products containing juice in retail establishments, such as the products implicated in this outbreak.

However, Governor Gary Locke directed the Washington State Board of Health to draw up rules to prevent Washington State establishments from serving contaminated fruit juices to unsuspecting customers.

"This action will make it mandatory for establishments to inform customers if they serve unpasteurized fruit juices," Locke said. "Consumers need to make their own choices. But this step will at least give them the information they need to make wise choices."

Sources:

*CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly, July 16, 1999
Sue Hutchcroft, FDA Pacific Region, August 5, 1999
Governor Locke's Communications Office, July 15, 1999
ProMED-mail Post, July 30, 1999*

Task Force Results

- Conducted a program to educate and sensitize Hispanic community members on the health dangers from eating traditional forms of Queso Fresco cheese.
- Cooperated with the CDC investigation by processing milk samples for the presence or absence of Salmonella.
- Implemented goals to stop illegal cheese production and sale.
- Educated licensed dairy owners and milk cooperatives of the dangers of selling raw milk and the need to take steps to prevent the theft or pilfering of raw milk.
- Provided several seminars to potential legal makers of the cheese to facilitate the availability of safe, legal Queso Fresco in the market place.
- Developed a Spanish and English brochure to disseminate information about making safe Queso Fresco.

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