



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Department of Health and Human Services
Food and Drug Administration



July 14, 1998

Food borne illness

REPORT TO THE DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

Subject: Status of Foodborne Illness for 1998

On behalf of our agencies and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this memorandum is intended to provide you with a brief report on the foodborne illness outbreaks identified thus far in 1998.

It has been less than two years since the President directed the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency to develop an initiative to reduce the millions of illnesses and thousands of deaths caused by food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, and parasites. With initial funding by Congress, we have already made major progress in efforts to better understand the causes of, and methods to prevent, these illnesses; to increase consumer and industry understanding of such preventive techniques; to implement a state-of-the-art inspection system for meat, poultry, and seafood, and to improve our ability to identify and track major outbreaks of foodborne illness.

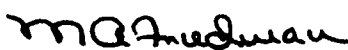
Combining the most modern techniques of DNA "fingerprinting" with proven methods of epidemiologic investigation, we have improved our ability to detect – and combat – foodborne illness more rapidly than ever before. For example, with additional resources from the National Food Safety Initiative, the CDC and the Department of Agriculture are identifying more cases of illness due to meat contaminated with deadly *E. coli* O157:H7 and removing contaminated product from the market before more cases can occur. CDC and the Food and Drug Administration rapidly investigated an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections transmitted by popular children's cereal, thus preventing additional cases.

Of course, this progress, while substantial, is only the beginning, and foodborne disease illnesses and outbreaks continue to occur at a pace that is of serious concern. Already, one outbreak affected persons in 23 states and another outbreak affected an estimated 6500 persons. As the attached table demonstrates, almost every state has investigated a foodborne outbreak. Those states where relatively few outbreaks have been investigated

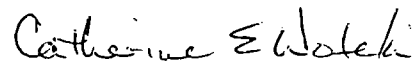
are usually those with fewer resources for such investigations. Similarly, the number of outbreaks for which the pathogen is unknown attests to the need for further improvements in tools for investigations. The sources of the outbreaks range from neighborhood picnics to restaurants to major food manufacturers.

Investigation of outbreaks gives us important insights into how foodborne illnesses occur, can be tracked, and can be contained – and how the National Food Safety Initiative can target the problem. For example, the new PulseNet system created by CDC is improving identification of these outbreaks, so state and Federal disease detectives are taking action faster than ever before. These life-saving advances to investigative capabilities now need to be repeated for other pathogens. The new state-of-the-art HACCP-based inspection system will reduce many of the problems in manufacturing facilities by helping food producers prevent contamination from occurring. And education of food processors, retailers, and consumers is helping them to adopt the latest methods of preventing food contamination.

However, outbreaks represent only the tip of the iceberg of foodborne illnesses. For every outbreak that is recognized and investigated, hundreds more persons develop foodborne illness that is not linked to an outbreak. While we continue to believe that the American food supply is the safest in the world, this listing of current outbreaks demonstrates that we as a nation have a tremendous opportunity to make the food supply safer. Indeed, if we can secure the necessary funding to implement the initiative, the partnerships that have been developed among the state and local governments, the Federal agencies responsible for food safety, and the food industry can save thousands of lives each year and eliminate billions of dollars in wasted costs to society. We believe that the National Food Safety Initiative will make an extremely important contribution in reducing death and illness caused by food pathogens in this country.



Michael A. Friedman
Acting Commissioner of Food and Drugs



Catherine E. Woteki
Under Secretary for Food Safety

Confirmed and Suspected U.S. Foodborne Disease Outbreaks January-July 1998, Reported as of July 10

MICROBIAL AGENT	MONTH	STATE (S)	NO. ILL	HOSP	SETTING	VEHICLE
<i>Campylobacter</i>	February	FL	-	-	Club	Unknown
Ciguatoxin	January	HI	3	0	Home	Fish (Grouper)
Ciguatoxin	March	HI	2	0	Home	Fish (Omilu)
<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	January	WI	34	0	Caterer	Sliced beef
<i>Escherichia coli</i> O6:H16	June	IL	6500	-	Caterer	Salads
<i>Escherichia coli</i> O157:NM	July	CA	5	-	Community	Unknown
<i>Escherichia coli</i> O157:H7	February	WA	2	1	Farm	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	April	WA	3	-	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	April	TX	4	-	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	April	TX	2	-	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	April / May	NY	11	3	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May	AZ	3	2	Picnic	Ground beef
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May	CA	2	0	Restaurant	Salad
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May	VA	6	2	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May / June	CT	10	1	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May / June	MA	7	0	Community	Ground beef
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May / June	MA	9	0	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May / June	ME	5	0	Community	Ground beef
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May / June	NH	7	1	Community	Ground beef
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May / June	NY	7	0	Community	Unknown
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	May / June	IN	33	5	Restaurant	Cole slaw
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	June	GA	2	2	Community	Unknown

MICROBIAL AGENT	MONTH	STATE (S)	NO. ILL	HOSP	SETTING	VEHICLE
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	June	VA	4	0	Community	Ground beef
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	June	WI	40	16	Community	Cheese curds
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	June	WI	40	-	Caterer	Fruit salad
Norwalk (Calicivirus)	March	WI	65	1	Nursing home	Unknown
Norwalk (Calicivirus)	April	WI	22	1	Restaurant	Unknown
Norwalk (Calicivirus)	April	VA	-	-	Dinner theatre	Unknown
<i>Salmonella</i> Agona	May / June	AR, CT, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, MD, MI, MO, NE, NJ, NY, OK, OH, PA, TN, WA, WV, WI	409	74	Community	Cereal
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	January	MD	8	0	Restaurant	Tiramisu
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	January	CA	4	3	Restaurant	Turkey stuffing
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	January	CA	26	3	Home	Lasagna
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	January	PA	4	2	Restaurant	Unknown
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	February	CT	12	1	Restaurant	Eggs
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	March	VA	20	5	Restaurant	Cream pies
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	March	IL/WI	2	0	Restaurant	Hollandaise sauce
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	March	UT	7	1	Home	Unknown
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	April	UT	5	0	Restaurant	Fried rice
<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis	May	UT	4	0	Restaurant	Caesar salad
<i>Salmonella</i> Havana	July	CA	11	-	Community	Unknown
<i>Salmonella</i> Heidelberg		PA	40	-	Church	Turkey / stuffing
<i>Salmonella</i> Heidelberg	April	IL	30	-	School	Unknown
<i>Salmonella</i> Montevideo	March	OH	5	-	Diner	Eggs
<i>Salmonella</i> Oranienburg	May / June	WA	8	-	Community	Unknown

MICROBIAL AGENT	MONTH	STATE (S)	NO. ILL	HOSP	SETTING	VEHICLE
<i>Salmonella Senftenberg</i>	July	CA	15	-	Community	Sprouts
<i>Salmonella Typhimurium</i>	June	MI	11	-	Community	Unknown
Scombroid	January	HI	2	0	Restaurant	Fish (Ahi)
Scombroid	January	HI	2	0	Home	Fish (Mahi-Mahi)
Scombroid	March	CA	6	0	Restaurant	Fish (Ahi)
<i>Shigella flexneri</i>	January	IN	25	3	Restaurant	Unknown
<i>Shigella flexneri</i>	January	CA	25	3	Restaurant	Unknown
<i>Shigella sonnei</i>	April	LA	70	-	School	Unknown
Small Round Structured Virus	March	TX	125	-	College	Deli Bar
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	February	IN	101	0	Prison	Macaroni salad
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	March	OR	5	1	Restaurant	Breading mix
Unknown	January	FL	3	-	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	January	CA	35	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	January	CA	9	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	IN	9	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	FL	3	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	FL	3	2	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	FL	4	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	OH	2	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	OR	15	0	Restaurant	Pasta Salad
Unknown	February	OR	38	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	OH	2	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	OR	15	0	Restaurant	Pasta salad

MICROBIAL AGENT	MONTH	STATE (S)	NO. ILL	HOSP	SETTING	VEHICLE
Unknown	February	OR	38	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	February	FL	16	-	School	Burritos
Unknown	March	GA	45	-	School	Burritos
Unknown	March	AL	2	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	March	AL	3	2	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	March	FL	50	0	Caterer	Combread stuffing
Unknown	April	OH	104	-	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	April	KS	30	0	Caterer	Unknown
Unknown	April	OR	16	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	April	KS	30	0	Caterer	Unknown
Unknown	April	WI	13	0	Food store	Unknown
Unknown	April	OR	16	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	April	WI	13	0	Food store	Unknown
Unknown	May	KS	5	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	May	KS	4	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	May	KS	5	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	May	KS	4	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	June	KS	24	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	June	KS	24	0	Restaurant	Unknown
Unknown	June	PA	-	-	Caterer	Salad
<i>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</i>	January	GUAM	47	0	Restaurant	Chicken
<i>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</i>	June	TX,FL,OK,TN,GA,CA	322	-	Community	Oysters
<i>Yersinia enterocolitica</i>	February	VA	8	-	Community	Unknown