

Questions and Answers

Q. What did the President announce today?

Q. How much disease is associated with juices?

Q. What effect will the President's announcement have?

Q. Could this have prevented some past incidents, such as Odwalla?

Q. When will it take effect? How does it effect the juice season?

Q. How does this fit with the President's overall plan for food safety?

Q. How much will it cost?

Q. How will this effect small farmers and road side stands?

Top News

Report: Odwalla in Plea Deal Talks

Sports

SEATTLE (AP) -- A company that produced unpasteurized apple juice linked to an E. coli outbreak in 1996 is negotiating a plea agreement in which it would admit to federal food-safety violations, a newspaper reported today.

Lotteries

International

National

The bacterial outbreak linked to Odwalla apple juice killed a Colorado girl and made nearly 70 other people ill in Washington, other states and British Columbia.

Washington

Business

Odwalla Inc. is likely to agree to a deal in which it would plead guilty to about a dozen misdemeanor charges related to food-safety deficiencies at its Dinuba, Calif., production plant, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported, citing unidentified sources.

Wall Street

Entertainment

No company officials would be charged, but the company would pay a \$1.5 million criminal fine, the sources said.

Health/Science

Regional

The only larger fine in an adulterated-food case in the United States was \$2 million paid by Beech-Nut Nutrition Corp. in 1987 for selling phony apple juice intended for babies, the paper said.

Unless negotiations break down, the Odwalla plea agreement is expected to be filed in federal court in California in the next few weeks, the sources said.

A federal grand jury in Fresno, Calif., has been investigating whether Odwalla, based in Half Moon Bay, Calif., ignored safety standards at the time of the outbreak.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Johns, who has headed the investigation, said he could neither confirm nor deny that a plea deal had been reached. Odwalla spokesman Chris Gallagher also declined to comment.

Company executives have acknowledged their safety systems didn't keep out the bacteria and said they didn't realize E. coli could live in something as acidic as apple juice. The company has since begun pasteurizing its apple juice.

Odwalla also faces at least two lawsuits filed by the families of two children who fell ill.

(PROFILE (CO:Odwalla Inc; TS:ODWA; IG:BVG;) (CAT:Business;) (CAT:Consumer;))

□AP-NY-04-15-98 1006EDT

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Food Safety - Juice - GW

Associated Cases per Year (FDA based on Todd)** in Table 11 is calculated in a

TABLE 11.—ESTIMATES OF JUICE-ASSOCIATED CASES PER YEAR

Hazard	Severity	Estimate of Under-reporting Correction Factor (FDA based on Bennett)	Estimate of Under-reporting Correction Factor (FDA based on Todd)	Estimate of Actual No. of Juice-Associated Cases per Year (FDA based on Bennett)	Estimate of Actual No. of Juice-Associated Cases per Year (FDA based on Todd)	
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	Mild	ND	195	ND	1 950	
	Moderate	ND	20	ND	130	
	Severe-acute	ND	7	ND	30	
	Severe-chronic	ND	7	ND	3	
	Death	ND	7	ND	4	
	Total cases			ND	2,100	
<i>Salmonella</i> (non typhi)	Mild	307	474	4,340	6,700	
	Moderate	307	45	2 010	290	
	Severe	246	4	268	4	
	Reactive arthritis- short term	307	474	150	230	
	Reactive arthritis- long term	307	474	300	460	
	Death	246	4	5		
	Total cases			6,600	7,000	
	<i>C. parvum</i>	Mild	100	100	4 300	4,300
		Moderate	10	10	40	40
Severe		5	5	2	2	
Death		5	5	04	04	
Total cases				4,300	4,300	
<i>B. cereus</i>	Mild	96	1,615	2,020	33,980	
	Moderate	96	1,615	20	340	
	Severe	0	0	0	0	
	Death	0	0	0	0	
	Total cases			2,000	34,300	

8. Percent of Cases Preventable by Proposal

In general, most pathogens will be eliminated when juice is heat-treated. For example, *Cryptosporidium*, *E. coli* O157:H7, and *Salmonella* should all be completely eliminated from juice by standard methods of flash pasteurization (absent extraordinarily high counts, detrimental human intervention, or equipment failure). However, hazards associated with *B. cereus* will not necessarily be eliminated by heat treatment. This bacterium forms spores which are more difficult to kill by heat. After heat treatment, if the spores survive, they may grow out and produce a toxin which causes illness. Ideally, the best way to reduce illness associated with *B. cereus* is by killing the bacterium in its nonspore state before any toxin has been produced. For most types of heat-treated juice, there is a small probability that the heat treatment will take place when *B. cereus* is in its nonspore state. To the extent that processors adopt controls for these hazards other than flash

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Food Safety Juice Me

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Orange Juice Makers Say They Can Meet Higher FDA Standard

By Jerry Jackson, The Orlando Sentinel, Fla.
Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News

Nov. 13--LAKE ALFRED, Fla.--Warning labels that could frighten consumers away from fresh orange juice could turn out to be rarer than those colorful citrus-carton labels of yesteryear.

Signs or labels warning consumers that fresh-squeezed juice has not been pasteurized will not be needed if companies can meet tough new quality standards, state and federal officials said Thursday.

A number of small juice producers responded that, not only can they meet the higher standards, they already are meeting them -- and others can, too.

"It's challenging ... but it's doable," Frank Martelli, manager of Orchid Island Juice Co. of Fort Pierce, testified during a Food and Drug Administration hearing in Polk County. "We've done it and we think we've done it in a convincing manner."

Peter Chaires, vice president of the Florida Gift Fruit Shippers Association, said he is confident the more than 140 member companies in his Orlando-based group will meet the higher standards -- which means warning signs and labels will never see the light of day.

The bottom line, out of hundreds of pages of regulations, is that companies that squeeze and sell fresh citrus juice need to document that they make a 100,000-fold reduction in potentially harmful microbes. Such a "5-log reduction," as it is called, is now considered the scientific standard for slashing potential contamination to negligible levels, FDA officials said.

The new anti-contamination rules -- requiring the labels or advanced treatment and testing -- took effect this month for all types of fresh juice. But because of confusion over the rules, the FDA is giving citrus companies until July to get things in order.

Even with the delay, companies must file a waiver letter and pledge that they are working toward compliance, with interim protective measures in place.

One microbial scientist, Steven Pao of the Florida Department of Citrus, testified that research he helped conduct shows that a simple technique -- briefly immersing oranges or grapefruit in hot water -- can do the trick.

Pao and another researcher inoculated the rind of Valencia oranges with common E. coli bacteria and achieved a 5-log reduction by dunking the fruit for 1 minute in water heated to 176 degrees, or for 2 minutes at 158 degrees.

Such water is hot enough to kill bacteria without hurting the taste or quality of the juice, Pao said -- as long as the fruit is not left in the water too long. As little as 4 minutes at the cooler temperature or 2 minutes at the hotter level begins to change the flavor.

That's why pasteurized juice tastes a little different from fresh -- it's heated to kill germs. The manager of one small juice company said he has already installed a natural-gas boiler to heat water in a 500-gallon tank. He said he plans to begin sending his fruit through the hot bath rather than using the older, but less effective method of a chlorine wash.

A hot-water bath may be good, but various anti-microbial chemicals will still likely be widely used -- and may even be necessary, one industry lawyer testified. He said small-business owners need to make sure that whatever they try is properly labeled for use on food, to avoid running afoul of some other food-quality regulation.

Some small fruit-company owners at the hearing were miffed by all the technical jargon and legal nuances -- and by what they consider regulatory overkill.

"Our store is 83 years old, and no one has ever gotten sick on our juice," said Stephanie Bojokles, owner of Tropical Fruit Shop of Palm Beach.

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