



The FSIS Perspective When Communicating Outbreak Investigations

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18th Annual PulseNet Update Meeting
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Objectives

Food Safety and Inspection Service Foodborne Illness Communications



- Understanding complexities of an outbreak investigation
- Knowing when a public alert is issued
- Knowing when a press release on a company recall is issued.

FSIS' Mission

The Food Safety and Inspection Service's mission is to ensure that meat, poultry, and processed egg products distributed in commerce for use as human food are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled.





Statutory Authority

FSIS performs its food safety, public health and food defense activities under four main acts:

- The Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906
- The Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1957
- The Egg Products Inspection Act of 1970
- Voluntary inspection under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946



Foodborne Illness

- Sickens 48 million Americans every year
- Causes 128,000 hospitalizations
- Kills more than 3,000 people
- Costs Billions
- Is preventable



A Complex Challenge

- Inherent risk of products
- Markedly increased demand
- Changes in production, supply chain, distribution
- Changing epidemiology, microbial ecology
- Emerging pathogens, chemical hazards, novel vehicles
- Increased risk of intentional contamination
- Changing consumer expectations, demands
- Increasing at-risk population



**What are we doing
to inform the public?**



How FSIS Investigates Outbreaks

Cluster detected: federal, state/local partners, FSIS Surveillance



Public health partner collaboration to determine potential association with FSIS-regulated product



Product testing by FSIS or partner labs to assist source identification



If FSIS-regulated product is implicated, a traceback investigation is initiated in collaboration with public health partners

Establishment identified and production lot linked to disease:

FSIS recommends voluntary product recall

Recall Press Release

No establishment or production lot pinpointed

FSIS may issue a public health alert

Public Health Alert Press Release



Illnesses Tied to FSIS Product

- FSIS liaisons to CDC, state and local public health officials monitor for illness outbreaks that may link to FSIS-regulated product
- Agencies share information regarding illness investigations with the overall goal of promoting public health
- Information disseminated during this stage is considered confidential and is shared on a need-to-know basis



FSIS Recalls and Public Health Alerts

- FSIS Directive 8080.1 (Revision 6) outlines how FSIS works with companies to recall products, including those associated with illness outbreaks
- FSIS Releases take 2 forms
 - Public Health Alert
 - Recall Release



Public Health Alert

- Used in instances where information is not yet developed to link to specific product or brand
- Often part of an ongoing investigation and notes FSIS may proceed with a recall action as more information becomes available
- May include information on illnesses, category of product, and appropriate general food safety guidelines



Recalls Releases

- FSIS issues a Recall Release for Class I and Class II recalls
- Recall Releases are written and released by FSIS, but company is given an opportunity to review for technical accuracy.
- Sample formats are provided in FSIS Directive 8080.1



Alerting the Public

- **For both Public Health Alerts and Recall Releases:**
 - Distributes to media in areas where product was shipped
 - Posts all Recall Releases at www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/recalls/



Alerting the Public

- Sends out notification to subscribers via RSS
 - Twitter feeds in English and Spanish
 - @USDAFoodSafety (launched in 2009) >325,000 followers
 - @USDAFoodSafe_es (launched in 2010) >1600 followers
 - State specific Twitter feeds launched in 2012

United States Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service



Thank You. Questions?



BACK UP SLIDES



Strategic Plan *FY 2011-2016*



FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION
SERVICE

FSIS Vision:

A trusted public health regulatory agency committed to preventing foodborne illness