



ECDC infographic on Listeriosis

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in association with the European Food Safety Authority has produced an infographic on Listeriosis which reinforces the dangers associated with *Listeria monocytogenes* for susceptible individuals.

Using data compiled in 2015, it reveals that there were 2,206 reported cases of Listeriosis and 1,524 cases where age and outcome data were available. Of those 1,524 cases, 64% cases were in people aged 65 or older, and 20% of those cases in the over 65's were fatal.

3.9% of ready to eat fish products were positive for *L. monocytogenes*, compared to 2.5% in ready to eat meat products and 1.1% in cheese products.

http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/food_and_waterborne_disease/PublishingImages/listeria-infographic-2016.pdf

In the US, the FDA has updated its information on *Listeria*, stating that an estimated 1,600 people get Listeriosis each year, and about 260 die. The infection is most likely to sicken pregnant women and their newborns, adults aged 65 or older, and people with weakened immune systems.

FDA publish interim results from cucumber sampling project

Following the report in last month's bulletin which implicated three *Salmonella* outbreaks in the US to the consumption of cucumbers, the FDA have released interim data from an on-going cucumber sampling project.

As of January 1, 2017, the FDA has tested 1,328 cucumber samples (352 domestic, 976 imports), and 1,387 hot pepper samples (287 domestic, 1,100 imports). Of the cucumber samples, 27 tested positive for *Salmonella* (11

domestic, 16 imports), while the rest tested negative for the targeted pathogens. Of the hot pepper samples, 42 tested positive for *Salmonella* (1 domestic, 41 imports), and 1 tested positive for a non-pathogenic strain of Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli*, while the rest tested negative for the targeted pathogens. Testing is still underway and the FDA state that no conclusions from the project can be drawn at this time.

Errington cheese saga rumbles on

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has described a decision by South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) to allow certain products produced by Errington cheese to be placed back on sale as premature.

The SLC applied a testing approach which led to the release of some batches of the Corra Linn cheese which tested negative for STEC's.

FSS stated that relying on testing results in isolation cannot provide sufficient assurance that the cheese was produced safely as *E. coli* can be unevenly distributed and it is possible to get both positive and negative results from the same batch.

Cheese was banned from sale last September after the FSS implicated batches of Dunsyre Blue cheese in an *E. coli* 0157 outbreak which affected 26 people and caused 1 fatality.

Errington Cheese have repeatedly stated their belief that their products are safe and that there is no link between their cheese and the outbreak.

This latest development illustrates how assurances on food safety cannot be given by microbiological testing alone, and risk assessments have to take into account all aspects

of the manufacturers food safety management programme in conjunction with their HACCP process.

Bagged salads and probiotics

For many years natural biocides such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* has been sprayed on certain crops because they have been shown to produce chemicals which act as insecticidal agents.

Now researchers at the University of Queensland have begun a 2 year study into the feasibility of incorporating “friendly” lactic acid bacteria into bagged salad mixes to try to prevent salmonella or listeria outbreaks by competitive inhibition of the pathogenic organisms within the salad bags.

The lettuce would be washed in a solution containing the bacteria and would stick to it in the packaging during its shelf-life.

It comes after 300 people in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia fell ill in February last year after an outbreak of salmonella in bagged salads and sprouts.

The researchers would also consider whether they could add other probiotics, which already commercially available.

Growers said the process of preparing ready-to-eat salads was already thorough and expensive, and the cost of adding probiotics would be incidental in the scheme of things.

Investigation into an unusual Salmonella serotype closes as no link found by WGS

On 27 January, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) issued an updated rapid risk assessment giving an overview of an increase in the number of *Salmonella* stourbridge cases in Germany during the second half of 2016, with other EU member states also reporting cases. Whole genome sequencing was carried out in a number of countries to try and establish the source of the outbreak.

Based on the microbiological evidence, ECDC does not consider this a multi-country ongoing event so the investigation of the event itself is being closed, while routine monitoring of the occurrence of the relatively uncommon *S. stourbridge* strains in humans will continue.

HPS publish annual report on Salmonella and Campylobacter

It's the time of year that authorities publish their annual summaries and the Health Protection agency in Scotland has published their annual figures on the incidence of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* infections.

In 2016, HPS received reports of 836 isolates of non-typhoidal *Salmonella* from people in Scotland – an increase of around 4% on the 803 reported in 2015. This further compares to 717 and 814 reports in 2014 and 2013 respectively.

During 2016, 5296 laboratory reports of *Campylobacter* were received by HPS. This was a decrease of 968 (15.5%) compared to 2015 when 6262 isolates were reported (Figure 2). This is the second consecutive year in which there has been a decline in reports of *Campylobacter*, with the reports in 2016 representing a decline of 1340 (20.2%) on the peak of 6636 reports in 2014.

Whether the decrease in *Campylobacter* is as a direct result of a television advertising campaign issued by Food Standards Scotland last year which featured a man dressed as a pink chicken running on a beach destroying children's sandcastles, with the tagline “don't let pink chicken spoil your summer” was not made clear.

PHE Campylobacter data 2006-2015.

Meanwhile Public Health England have published data on *Campylobacter* infections from 2006-2015.

The downward trend reported in Scotland is mirrored with 55,697 cases reported in 2015, compared to 62,697 in 2014. The report also reiterates the estimate that for every 1 case of *Campylobacter* identified in national surveillance, there are an estimated 9.3 cases in the community. 54% of the *Campylobacter* cases were male, with the highest number of cases reported in the 50-59 age range, and the peak month for *Campylobacter* reporting was in June.

Compensation paid to victims of Newcastle curry festival Salmonella outbreak

In my very first Micro Bulletin (May 2013), I reported on a *Salmonella* outbreak which affected over 400 people attending a curry festival in Newcastle which was traced to contaminated raw curry leaves which were used in chutney sold at the event.

Nearly four years later, details of compensation payments have just been released. 50 people who took part in a

group action have been awarded a total of £400,000 with affected individuals receiving payouts ranging from £1,200-£29,000.