

LISTERIOSIS & CANTALOUPE



CAUGHT 'N THE NET?

By: Dr. Gary C. Smith

At least 148 illnesses and 30 deaths are associated with a current multistate listeriosis outbreak. FDA, CDC and Colorado DPHE used DNA fingerprinting to progressively identify *L. monocytogenes*, cantaloupes, Colorado and Jensen Farms (Granada, CO) as the culprits. FDA performed a “root-cause investigation and environmental assessment.” It matched listeria DNA from patients to Listeria DNA on packing-plant equipment and stored cantaloupes and concluded that unsanitary handling conditions at Jensen Farms was the “root-cause.” In its “environmental assessment,” FDA found no Listeria DNA in the farm’s soil or on cantaloupes in the fields. CPHE reported that: (a) Jensen Farms had not cooled the melons or washed them in a chlorine bath before shipment, and (b) a private audit commissioned by Jensen Farms a few days before the melons were shipped noted most of the deficiencies yet failed to “red-flag” them and gave the company a rating of “Superior” and a score of 96 of 100.

Articles in USA Today and The Denver Post (both on October 21, 2011) were critical of “so-called third-party audits, used increasingly by food sellers who hire auditing companies to check the safety and sanitation of companies that sell them

products.” Attorney Bill Marler was quoted as saying “I have never sued a third-party audit firm but am thinking this may be the time to do it.”

Looking forward, what might cantaloupe growers/packers do to help assure an effective food safety management system?

- **Regulatory Oversight:** Even if Food Safety Modernization Act (2011) is fully funded, each food production facility must be visited by an FDA inspector only once per 5-7 years. Following the FDA Guideline For Melon Growers (2009) and advice of Extension Specialists is recommended.
- **Production Protocols:** What produce farmers call “gaps” and “gips” should be used. Good Agricultural Practices include food safety oversight of soil, water, seed, soil amendments (e.g., manure), protection from domesticated-animal and wildlife encroachment. Good Handling or Hygienic Practices include: (a) for workers training, toilets, hand-washing; (b) for products that contact soil plastic ground-cover, cups; (c) for farm equipment--cleaning and sanitizing.
- **Processing/Packing Protocols:** Follow FDA’s Eight Key Sanitation Conditions. Better yet, implement a robust HACCP plan.

Even better, become certificated by a GFSI approved certification body (e.g., SQF, BRC, IFS). GFSI certification requires third-party audits, but facility review is not complete (and product cannot be shipped) until corrective actions for all non-conformities are completed, reviewed and approved.

- **Microbiological Testing Programs:** Conduct environmental sampling of fields, equipment, factory and conveyances. Use microbiological interventions in the factory (e.g., oxidizing agents, organic acids, high- or low-pH solutions). Use in-house monitoring for tracking-and-trending. Follow test-and-hold protocols for in-coming raw material and finished product.



Dr. Gary C. Smith
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LETTER FROM THE CEO

The Holidays are a time to gather with family and give thanks for all the blessings that have come our way. There will be turkey, ham and who knows how many other delicious sides and treats on our tables this holiday season. And thanks to you, our customers and other food processors, everyone can be assured that they are eating the highest quality, safest foods ever. Thanks to all of the efforts you make to produce safe food, this is possible.

FSNS would like to thank you for your business this year. We appreciate the partnership we have with each of you. Our mission is to provide you with outstanding customer service and we work every day to keep improving. Thanks to our team members and your feedback, we will continue to improve.



Next year will bring changes whether it is STEC testing or the FSMA and its implementation. FSNS will be prepared to assist you in meeting these changes and we look forward to discussing these with you. Once again, thank you for your support.

Homero Recio
Chief Executive Officer

*Happy Holidays,
Merry Christmas
and Best Wishes
to you in 2012!*

EDUCATION & TRAINING COURSE SCHEDULE 2012

2012 BRC Course

January 18 - 20	Green Bay, WI
February 8-10	San Antonio, TX
February 29 - March 2	Stillwater, OK
March 28-30	Los Angeles, CA
May 30 - Jun 1	Atlanta, GA
June 27 - 29	Dallas, TX
October 24 - 26	Phoenix, AZ
November 14 - 16	Fresno, CA

2012 HACCP Course

Register 4 weeks prior to course and receive a 5% discount!

February 23 - 24	San Antonio, TX
March 8 - 9	Los Angeles, CA
April 26 - 27	Dallas, TX
May 24 - 25	Fresno, CA
June 14 - 15	Green Bay, WI
September 27 - 28	Phoenix, AZ
December 6 - 7	San Antonio, TX

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FSNS TARGETS NON-O157 SHIGA TOXIN-PRODUCING ESCHERICHIA COLI (STEC)

Recently the USDA published the revised method for “Detection and Isolation of non-O157 Shiga-toxin Producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) from Meat Products”¹. FSIS made numerous revisions to the method, including the inclusion of latex agglutination on presumptive STEC colonies. It is expected that these revisions will increase the sensitivity, accuracy and Turn-around-time of the method, and may also reduce the number of samples requiring confirmation.

Food Safety Net Services (FSNS) has performed comprehensive non-O157 STEC testing with a variety of clients and is proficient in this testing. FSNS is a food safety partner committed to providing expert resources and unsurpassed results at the highest quality of service. Currently, FSNS offers STEC testing using Dupont Qualicon’s BAX system and, BioControl’s Assurance GDS.

“Food Safety Net Services is committed to providing our clients all our resources to help them through these new regulations. FSNS is actively evaluating additional systems and methods to provide clients with the best option currently in the market,” said Gina Bellinger, President of Food Safety Net Services.

FSNS has the flexibility and capacity needed to work with companies and accommodate trial runs for the non-O157 STEC testing. FSNS is equipped to assist clients through this process to ensure that they are prepared for the new beef testing regulations by providing insight to STEC prevalence in their beef products. This information will present the opportunity to proactively reevaluate current HACCP/Quality systems and minimize the impact of the March 5, 2012 deadline.

AUDITING

Increased focus in being placed on third party auditing throughout the food industry. Third party audits are completed to give customers confidence that their food is being manufactured in a manner that produces both safe and quality product. Our roll as auditors is to assess both the facility’s programs as well as their processing environment in an objective, accurate, and consistent manner. Using established auditing tools such as Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) approved standards, American Meat Institute (AMI) Animal Welfare guidelines, and other industry specific guidelines auditors assess the overall compliance of the facility.

Requirements that companies are expected to meet are continuously changing. One of the biggest changes that challenge many companies is documentation. The only way to effectively evaluate if a requirement is being fulfilled or is being performed as required is through the evaluation of documentation. This poses a challenge to both big and small companies due to the management of the programs and the paperwork that is generated. Auditors often request to review the documentation associated with a program only to find that the monitoring is not being conducted as originally designed. Training and ongoing review of the paperwork being generated is the key to being successful. Once a program has been established and employees are instructed to perform the task we often believe that it is successfully implemented and go on with other commitments. However, all programs must be reviewed to assure they are being implemented as designed. Watching our employees perform the task, asking questions, and ensuring they understand what they were asked to perform is the key to successful implementation. Auditors can only assess what they can see and review. Remember if it is not documented it did not happen!



Lori Ernst
Director of Auditing Services

¹ Microbiology Laboratory Guidebook: 5B.01

FOOD SAFETY NET SERVICES CELEBRATES NEW LOS ANGELES LABORATORY

OPENING WITH A FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE & OPEN HOUSE



FSNS celebrated the opening of its ISO 17025 accredited laboratory in Los Angeles, California by hosting a food safety conference followed by a laboratory tour and reception. The event which took place December 9th, included a day-long conference followed by attendees touring the new laboratory, ribbon cutting ceremony and reception. The new laboratory is located at 6281 Chalet Dr., Commerce, CA.

Temple Grandin, Ph.D., professor of animal science, Colorado State University, was the conference keynote speaker and spoke about the 'Developing Measures of Animal Welfare'. Grandin is a best-selling author, advisor and consultant to the livestock industry on animal behavior. She is listed in the 2010 Time 100 list of the 100 most influential people in the world in the category "Heroes."

Other industry leaders that spoke during the conference included Craig Wilson, VP, GMM Food Safety and Quality Assurance, Costco Wholesale Corporation; Gary C. Smith, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Colorado State University, FSNS Board Member; Samer Mohamed, General Manager, Quality Assurance, Paramount Farms; Patricia Wester, Vice President, Regulatory Affairs, FSNS and Melinda Hayman, Principal Scientist, FSNS.

Gina Bellinger, President – Food Safety Net Services (FSNS) said, "We are proud of our new laboratory and its ability to provide much needed services for the Los Angeles community of growers, producers, manufacturers and processors."

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

**PTNPA Convention
& Trade Show**
January 13-16
Orlando, FL

**IPE-U.S. Poultry &
Egg Association**
January 23-27
Atlanta, GA

**NMA Annual
Convention**
February 14-18
Tucson, AZ

**SMA Mid-Year
Conference**
Arlington, TX
February 7-8

**American
Pistachio
Growers**
San Diego, CA
February 20-22

**Southeast IFT
Food Industry
Expo**
Smyrna, GA
February 28

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE EVENTS VISIT US AT FSNS.COM.