What Is Going On with Romaine Lettuce & *E. coli* O157:H7?

Live Q&A Event for Health & Food Safety Educators

December 5, 2019
Today’s Event Line-up

• **Dr. Jennifer McEntire**, Vice President of Food Safety & Technology, United Fresh Produce Association

• **Dr. Trevor V. Suslow**, Vice President of Food Safety, Produce Marketing Association

• **Resources**: Where to get more information

www.fightbac.org | storyofyourdinner.org | safercipeguide.org
Welcome from PFSE

Shelley Feist
Executive Director

Partnership for Food Safety Education

www.fightbac.org
Important Housekeeping

To ask a question, please use the question box on the right of the screen.

After the webinar, you will receive a brief survey. Please fill it out. Help us improve!
Poll Question

How confident are you in your awareness around handling of lettuce to reduce risk from harmful bacteria?

1. I’m very confident in my awareness
2. I’m somewhat confident but want more info
3. I’m not confident at all / super confused
Guest Speakers

Dr. Jennifer McEntire
Vice President of Food Safety & Technology
United Fresh Produce Association
www.unitedfresh.org

Dr. Trevor V. Suslow
Vice President of Food Safety
Produce Marketing Association
www.pma.com
Outbreak Snapshot

- 102 illnesses
- 23 states
- Illnesses began Sept. 24
- Last illness Nov. 18
About Romaine

Advisory is for romaine grown in Salinas, CA (This is a broad region)

DYK?
Americans eat about 12 lbs. romaine, or 115 servings, each year

Romaine on the market now is NOT from Salinas Valley region

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What Should You Look For?

On bags of romaine, salad blends containing romaine, sandwiches and wraps with romaine, etc.
What Not To Do

• Don’t be confused by company headquarters
• Don’t avoid romaine from other areas
• Don’t avoid other leafy greens
• Don’t expect washing to ensure safety
What Is Industry Doing?

- State and federal regulations
- Stringent customer requirements
- Water is tested & treated
- Extensive testing, certification and record keeping for soil amendments, including compost and fertilizers
- Pre-season and pre-harvest assessments required (animal intrusions, flooding, proximity to animal feeding operations, etc.)
- Increasing frequency and stringency of harvest equipment sanitation
- Improving traceback from the consumer back to the grower
So What Are We Missing?

• The seasonal window of these outbreaks is telling us something - but what?
• Factors known and suspected
  ➢ Current programs, testing, and audits need science and practice-based adjustments
• Linking them together in a true industry-government-academic partnership for solutions has not happened ... but we are getting there

What does this gap tell us?

People infected with the outbreak strain of *E. coli* O157:H7, by date of illness onset

Advisories
Nov 22, 2019

December 2, 2019
What Else Should Food Preparers & Consumers Know?

- Proper washing of bulk romaine and romaine hearts may be helpful
  - *But, again, does not guarantee safety*
- Rewashing of packaged precut romaine has no value
- Consumer-available fruit & veggie washes may remove adhering soil but very limited impact on pathogens if present
- Modern technologies are giving researchers and public health agencies powerful but previously missing tools to conduct root-cause analysis
  - *If you think you’re ill, seek medical attention!*

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If someone has symptoms —

Who to Contact

• Consumers who have symptoms should contact their health care provider to report their symptoms and receive care.

• To report a complaint or adverse event (illness or serious allergic reaction), you can:
  - Call an FDA Consumer Complaint Coordinator at (800) 877-8339
  - Complete an electronic or paper Voluntary MedWatch form online.
  - Visit www.fda.gov/fcic for consumer and industry assistance.
ProducePro www.fightbac.org

Science behind the messages document available
Questions for the experts?

Jennifer McEntire, UFPA
Trevor Suslow, PMA
Ashley Eisenbeiser, FMI
Resources & Links for Health Educators

• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

• Latest updates from the FDA on this topic

• Symptoms of *E. coli* infection
Thank You
2019 Tier II PFSE Partners

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**Federal Government Liaisons**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. Food & Drug Administration, CFSAN
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FSIS FSES
U.S. Department of Agriculture, NIFA
Thank You, Speakers!

Dr. Jennifer McEntire  
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Thank You, BAC Fighters!

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