

WHAT'S NEW AT Q

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An ISO/IEC 17025 Accredited Laboratory

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



We see significant ebb and flow regarding the type of testing requests we receive here at Q Laboratories, Inc. One area we have seen a continual growth in samples submitted in the last 5 years is allergen screening. As awareness of food allergies increases and testing methods become more accurate and cost-effective, more food, beverage and ingredient

manufacturers are instituting routine allergen screening as part of their product and environmental testing regimen. To underscore the focus on allergen testing, the University of Manchester in Manchester, England has initiated one of the largest food allergen studies conducted to date. The study includes contributing experts and stakeholders from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Europe. The study is expected to take 3 years at a cost of \$11.5 million. The ultimate goal of the project is to study and develop techniques and processes to help prevent food allergens from accidentally being mixed with foods that share processing equipment, called cross-contamination. Here at Q Laboratories we have always strived to provide the latest, cutting-edge allergen screening methods and will continue to do so. We will also continue to keep a close watch on studies like the one mentioned here and other research and development activities in food allergen screening and prevention.

David G. Goins

David G. Goins, President

BOXED BEEF

In March, the USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) released an Audit Report entitled, "FSIS E. coli Testing of Boxed Beef." The objective of the audit was to determine if USDA-FSIS was sufficiently sampling boxed beef and testing for E. coli, as mandated by agency procedures, and requesting correct samples and whether the industry's trace back documentation is adequate and used effectively to determine the source of E. coli contamination. The OIG Auditors reviewed data from 1750 firms producing boxed beef product and visited processing facilities to gather first-hand data. The Audit Report contains 12 recommendations for improving the USDA oversight as well as the USDA response to each recommendation. The Auditors concluded, "We recommend that FSIS take additional steps to ensure that beef to be ground throughout the production process – from Federally inspected slaughter establishments to local grocery stores – be subject to FSIS sampling and testing for E. coli."

MEET THE Q LABORATORIES' STAFF

Herb Birkenhauer has been named Chemistry Lab Supervisor at Q Laboratories, Inc. Herb will be responsible for everyday operations in the Chemistry Lab including analyst training, meeting quality and proficiency parameters, achieving technological benchmarks and coordinating the efficiency of sample flow-through in all areas of the Chem Lab.



FOODBORNE ILLNESS STUDY

Using 10 years of collected data, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is publishing a study in the Emerging Infectious Diseases journal, entitled "Attribution of Foodborne Illnesses, Hospitalizations, and Deaths to Food Commodities By Using Outbreak Data, United States, 1998-2008."

The study classifies food products into 17 categories and examines over 4500 foodborne illness outbreaks over the ten year period. The study looked at not just the frequency of illness by each food type, but also the severity, tracking both illnesses caused by food, as well as deaths caused by foodborne contamination. The 17 food categories defined by the study are: fish, crustaceans, mollusks, dairy, eggs, beef, game, pork, poultry, grains-beans; oils-sugars [refined plant foods]; fruits-nuts; fungi; and leafy, root, sprout, and vine-stalk vegetables.

The study reports, "More illnesses were attributed to leafy vegetables (22%) than to any other commodity; illnesses associated with leafy vegetables were the second most frequent cause of hospitalizations (14%) and the fifth most frequent cause of death (6%). Previous studies have shown that produce-containing foods were the food source for approximately half of norovirus outbreaks with an identified simple food vehicle during 2001–2008 and the second most frequent food source for E. coli O157 outbreaks during 1982–2002. Outbreaks of E. coli O157 infections transmitted by spinach and lettuce and Salmonella spp. infections transmitted by tomatoes, juice, mangoes, sprouts, and peppers underline concerns about contamination of produce consumed raw."

"More deaths were attributed to poultry (19%) than to any other commodity, and most poultry-associated deaths were caused by Listeria or Salmonella spp. From 1998 through 2002, three large listeriosis outbreaks were linked to turkey delicatessen meat contaminated in the processing plant after cooking. "The dairy commodity was the second most frequent food source for infections causing illnesses (14%) and deaths (10%). Foods in this commodity are typically consumed after pasteurization, which eliminates pathogens, but improper pasteurization and incidents of contamination after pasteurization occur."

The authors of the study offered the following summary: "Our outbreak-based method attributed most foodborne illnesses to food commodities that constitute a major portion of the US diet. When food commodities are consumed frequently, even those with a low risk for pathogen transmission per serving may result in a high number of illnesses. The attribution of foodborne-associated illnesses and deaths to specific commodities is useful for prioritizing public health activities; however, additional data on the specific food consumed is needed to assess per-serving risk. "

TRADE SHOWS

Q Laboratories, Inc. will have representatives at the following industry events in the upcoming months:

- ▶ **National Restaurant Association Expo**, May 18-21, Chicago (Booth# 5628)
- ▶ **IFT Annual Meeting and Expo**, July 14-16, Chicago; (Booth# 4318)
- ▶ **IAFP 2013 Annual Meeting**, July 28-31 Charlotte, NC; (Booth# 113)

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