



Food Protection Committee

FPC Newsletter

FALL, WINTER, 2020

Volume 6, Issue 3

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POINTS OF INTEREST

- PFAS chemicals have been used since the 1940s.
- They contaminate soil, water, and food, causing numerous health issues.
- Several states have now banned PFAS chemicals in food packaging.
- Although not made in the US, foreign countries still use PFAS in products.

BOAH deals with state's pandemic

The State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) has had to adjust as it deals with the COVID-19 pandemic challenges affecting Indiana.

Bret Marsh, DVM. Indiana State Veterinarian, talked to members of the IEHA Food Protection Committee via *Microsoft Teams*, and said that the primary mission of BOAH includes Animal Health, Emergency Preparedness, Food Safety, and Animal Care, and the agency has been able to carry out its mission despite the pandemic.

Dr. Marsh also described some of the challenges faced by meat producers

when meat and processing plants had to shut down to reduce the virus's spread among workers. He said hogs (for example) are grown with the expectation they will go to market on a certain time schedule after reaching a certain size and weight. With plants closed, producers had hogs ready for market and no place to take them. In many cases, animals had to be destroyed. This backup also affected feed producers as demand was reduced.

Dr. Marsh also said the agency keeps track of animal locations to facilitate traceback, but he also noted an increase of animal imports from oth-

er states.

Dr. Marsh said one of the questions brought up has been whether companion animals contribute to the COVID-19 spread. He said there has been no evidence of such animals passing the virus to humans, or any animal to human transfer.

Indiana in 2019 -

- 4.16 billion pounds of milk were produced.
- 16.5 million pounds of meat were inspected.
- 117 establishments under BOAH inspection.

What you should know about...

PFAS CHEMICALS

PFAS seems to be everywhere, including food packaging. As per the EPA definition, Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS,

GenX, and many other chemicals. PFAS have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe including in the United States since the 1940s, with use increasing rapidly by the 1950s.

Because of their repellent properties, PFAS chemicals show up in everything from clothing to firefighting foam. And as a result, they are everywhere, and say researchers, they never go away.

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Man defrosts Thanksgiving turkey in pool

This might come under the heading of “Don’t try this at home”, but a Florida man always draws attention to himself by using a most unusual way of defrosting his Thanksgiving turkey - his inground swimming pool. As reported by staff at WFTS, Mark O’Donnell and his family have made this an annual tradition, utilizing a different family member each year to toss the bird into the water.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends thawing frozen food by one of several methods, that include thawing under re-

frigeration, thawing under running water, microwaving it, or as part of a cooking process. Tossing a frozen bird in a swimming pool is not one of the suggested methods.

It all began, O’Donnell says, when one year, the family forgot to take the frozen turkey out of the freezer. “I have an idea,” he said, and the tradition began. The turkey thaws in just a couple of hours, he claims.

Don’t pool chemicals get into the turkey? He believes the turkeys are sealed

well at processing, and he’s never had one let chlorine inside in the 18 years he’s been using the pool-thawing method.

Frozen turkeys do float, and a net is used to retrieve the birds. Maybe the chlorine helps kill the bacteria present in raw poultry.



Most agree: vaccinate plant workers early

Once deemed “essential” workers by the government, and considering how the COVID-19 pandemic has hurt meat and poultry plant workers, there seems now to be widespread agreement that those workers should be front of the line to receive vaccines.

“There seems to be widespread agreement to vaccinate plant workers first.”

Stakeholders including the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and the North American Meat Institute (NAMI) are in agreement after reports that 128 plant workers have died and almost 20,000 workers have

been infected or exposed to the virus. According to news reports, those workers were among the first to be victims of the pandemic.

NAMI spokespersons say the industry has spent over \$1 billion to implement changes recommended by the government, along with other controls. Three vaccines are waiting FDA approval.

(reported in Food Safety News)

Where did that food come from?

Traceability is the name of the game when it comes to tracking where food originates. As reported in *Food Safety News*, the U.S. FDA has long wanted the industry to improve the “traceability in the food system.”

New research in how to im-

prove the system was prompted by increasing recalls of contaminated produce. It was noted that investigations could be conducted more effectively with more product information available during tracebacks. Standardizing the procedures would also help.

As a result of interviewing par-

ticipants in three research projects that tracked lettuce through supply chains, all agreed that the use of a standard template for information would help provide accurate and timely information.

Past recalls faced challenges from a lack of information at some steps in the chain.

Is it a certificate or a certification?

With the continuing need for retail food establishments to have a certified food handler available, confusion results when a food employee or manager does not know exactly what “certification” means. When asked, one might show the inspector a certificate, but that isn’t the same thing.

The International Food Protection Training Institute has offered a clear comparison between a certification and a certificate. To hold a certification, one must pass a proctored examination by an accredited testing service. Accepted examinations are approved by the

Conference for Food Protection (CFP). A certification will have ongoing requirements to keep the credential.

Certificates are provided to show that the participant has attended or completed a course or series of courses.

There won’t be any ongoing requirements. An inspector must look closely as some certificates are printed to look professional and can come from entities that also



offer certifications.

Any course that results in a participant obtaining a certificate often is not tied to any particular subject matter standards. But a certification is intended to show a certain mastery or competency of specific standards in food safety. These standards will be set through industry-wide development overseen by the CFP.

However, one sure fire way to determine the value of the document shown is to ask how much the holder paid for it. If it was only a few dollars, it’s not a certification!

Thanks to JoAnn Xiong-Mercado

What you should know about... (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

PFAS chemicals have also been used in food packaging, which is causing alarm among some states, leading to legislation banning their use, according to *Food Safety News*.

New York now joins Maine and Washington in banning PFAS in food packaging. The chemicals were used because of their properties to repel grease and

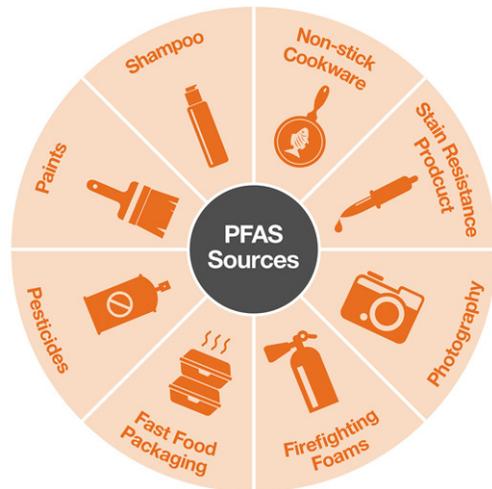
water. But the chemicals have been found to transfer to the foods they are intended to protect. According to studies by the US Food and Drug Administration, PFAS chemicals have been detected in a variety of foods, from produce to seafood,

“PFAS chemicals are being used in food packaging, leading several states to ban their use.”

to baked goods. Studies have shown that up to 95% of consumers test positive for PFAS.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to PFAS chemicals puts people at risk for immunotoxicity, cancer, thyroid disease, birth defects, and reduced sperm quality. The immune response to childhood vaccines is reduced and the risk of contracting an infectious disease is increased.

PFAS exposure has been linked to higher vulnerability to the severe symptoms of COVID-19. Other ways PFAS chemicals are getting into food include the



processing equipment, and contaminated soil and water.

Many PFAS chemicals are no longer manufactured in the United States as the result of a phase out agreed to by eight major chemical manufacturers. But they are still made elsewhere and imported into the U.S. in a variety of products.



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FOOD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

www.iehaind.org

IEHA MISSION:

To promote, preserve and protect environmental public health in the State of Indiana, and to encourage a spirit of cooperation among all environmental health stakeholders while serving its members in the regulatory, industry and academic communities.

The **Food Protection Committee (FPC)** is one of four standing subcommittees of the **Indiana Environmental Health Association, Inc.** The committee meets approximately four times per year with dates and locations chosen by the members. Its focus is to discuss food safety related issues of interest to its members. While all IEHA members and guests may attend meetings, only voting members, as specified in the IEHA Constitution and Bylaws, may vote. Meeting information is disseminated by email. To be added to the email list, contact one of the co-chairs, or your IEHA chapter representative.

FPC Co-chairs: Sarah Dallas, Amy Ayers

FPC Newsletter Editor: Ed Norris

Tidbits and morsels

The Food Protection Committee has chosen committee co-chairs for 2021. They are Mariah Allen, and Amy Ayers. Mariah is a Regional Food Specialist with Meijer, and Amy is an Environmental Health Specialist with the Boone Co. Health Dept. Amy served last year, while Mariah follows Sarah Dallas.



Did you know that many food establishments here today started out with different names? The website www.eatthis.com says that the *McDonald's* brand name alone is worth almost \$43 million. That's the brand name, not including the business with worldwide revenues over \$21 billion last year. Would the value be that high under the original name, *McDonald's Bar-B-Q*? The name change came in 1948.

How about *Chick-fil-A*? It was originally called *Dwarf House*. The name changed to reflect its big menu item.

A Michigan pizza shop was called *DomiNick's* until it changed to *Domino's Pizza Inc.* How about *Panera Bread*. It started as the St. Louis Bread Co. Panera means "bread time" in Italian.



Have you ever wondered why crackers have holes in them? It turns out there is a good reason for that. Whether it's an iconic cracker like a "Ritz", a graham cracker, or a saltine, you will find multiple holes in the center.

As www.mashed.com reports, those holes are called "dockers" and their purpose is to let steam escape during baking. Besides stopping air

bubbles from forming in the cracker, crackers won't rise like bread dough would, keeping them flat and with the crispy texture expected.

"Docker" is also the name for the device (a cylinder with spikes) used to roll over the dough prior to baking. The hole spacing is changed depending upon the type of cracker, baking temperature, and desired appearance.

