



# FoodBytes

Indiana State Department of Health

## Food recalls require local action

Food recalls make news, especially when people get sick. A food recall makes even bigger news when the recall involves a food no one would ever suspect, like peanut butter. Even more rare is the fact that the peanut butter was contaminated with a bacterial strain most people had never heard of: *Salmonella tennessee*.

Although manufacturers are usually prompt to inform stores of recalls through their distribution channels, local inspectors need to double check stores to assure managers are aware of the recall, and to verify that the recalled products



were pulled. In the case of peanut butter, there was a ripple effect. Peanut butter made in the suspected plant was also sent to several other manufacturers for use in products like toppings and single-serving sizes of certain candy.

The Indiana State Department of Health will always be diligent in providing recall information to local inspectors as quickly as possible, but it will be local inspectors who must assure that the recall is carried out at retail stores.

## What about distribution sites?

The recent illness outbreak that officials traced to peanut butter brought up another concern.

Many times, foods considered non-perishable are donated to food banks, church groups, or other entities that can distribute the food

to those in need. When a food such as peanut butter is recalled local inspectors should check these food distribution sites to assure they know about pertinent food recalls and that any suspect products are discarded. Sites won't typically hear from manufacturers.

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## Inside Story Headline

People who own pets generally treat them like children. Because of this fact, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) now looks at pet food the same as food for humans.

Local health department inspectors may do the same when conducting grocery store inspections. Are pet food displays protected from contamination? Are pet foods stored and displayed so that chemical or physical contamination won't occur?

Although such violations are not marked on the inspection form and not regulated by ISDH law, any potential issues should be mentioned to store operators along with suggestions for changes in the store's storage or display practices.

Recently, pet food sales have taken a new twist. Some enterprising vendors are making and marketing pet foods made at their homes and offering them for sale at farmers markets. "Doggie Treats" and similar items are showing up.

The latest product marketed as

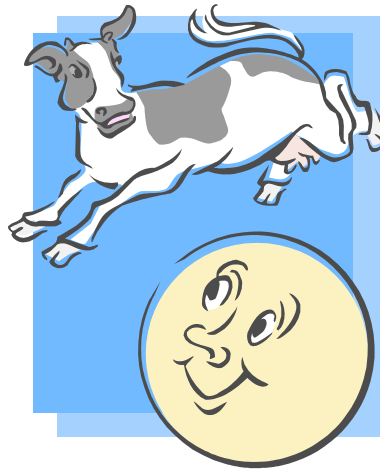


"pet food" is raw milk. The vendor at a recent farmers market tried to skirt the prohibition of selling raw milk away from his farm by calling it "pet food." But a sharp-eyed Hoosier inspector questioned it.

### Sale of pet food needs licensure

In this instance, the raw milk being sold, was marked as being "pet food," but there was no other labeling that is required by Indiana law.

The sale of



pet food is regulated in Indiana and such sales require a permit from the Indiana Office of the State Chemist at Purdue University. Any pet food product must also be clearly labeled, "Not for human consumption" so consumers are warned not to drink the milk or eat the food.

FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have again repeated their warnings of the health dangers of consuming raw milk. They say raw milk can be contaminated with a wide variety of harmful bacteria including *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, *E. coli O157:H7*, *Campylobacter*, and *Brucella*.

FDA says that raw milk, no matter how safely produced, may still be unsafe.

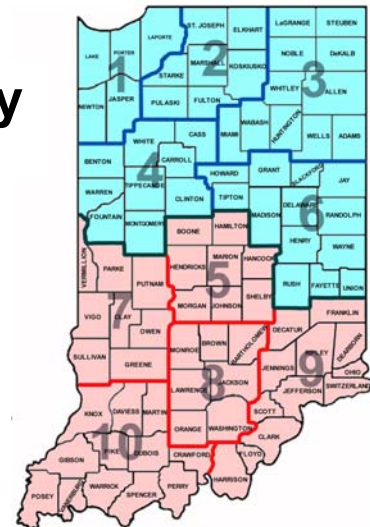
Although pet food is not regulated by ISDH, 410 IAC 7-24 does prohibit the sale of raw milk under Section 147.

## Food Defense regions adjusted slightly

The territory covered by each of the two Food Defense Specialists for the Indiana State Department of Health has been changed.

The old boundary divided the North and South regions along a line roughly represented by I-70. The new regions follow the Public Health District boundaries.

George Jones is responsible for the Northern Region with Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. Travis Goodman oversees Districts 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 in the Southern Region. Contact them via e-mail or by telephone concerning food defense issues.



## It's only a matter of time until the pages fade away

No, FoodBytes will not be printed with disappearing ink, but rather the method of delivery will change. In keeping with the trend of going “electronic,” FoodBytes will be ending its printed version later this year.

This will provide a more efficient delivery of FoodBytes and allow the full use of color, not possible with the current budget restraints.

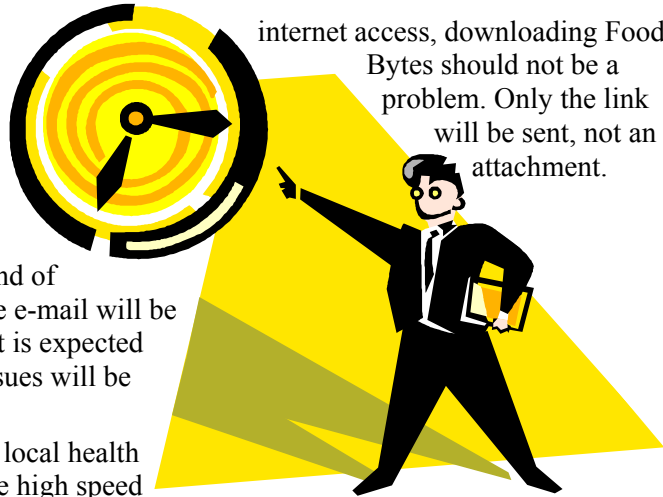
“We are in the transition period,” says Ed Norris, editor. “As

each issue is mailed out, an e-mail is also sent to recipients containing a link to that issue on-line.”

Before the end of the year, only the e-mail will be sent to readers. It is expected that two more issues will be mailed.

Now that all local health departments have high speed

internet access, downloading FoodBytes should not be a problem. Only the link will be sent, not an attachment.



## What do the dates on commercial products mean?

The date on any food product offered for sale to the public might use different wordings. Dates might be preceded by such language as, “expiration,” “sell by,” “best if used by” or “expires.”

Since there are so many variables that affect the validity of date marks, there is no specific requirement or formula for what a date mark should mean on commercially prepared products. While food inspectors are concerned about a food product’s safety, manufacturers also consider a product’s quality and appeal in selecting date codes.

Manufacturers also use date codes, a series of numbers that indicate the date of production.

So what do some of the date expressions mean?

The “expiration” or “use by” date is the date by which the manufacturer recommends the product

be used, or frozen, to ensure quality and consistency.

The “sell by” date mark is typically used on foods with a relatively short shelf life, like milk or yogurt, and where freshness and safety control is primarily managed by the retail food establishment. It is the last date by which the manufacturer says the product should be sold.

Major manufacturers say such products can be safely consumed a short time after these dates. Since inspectors are concerned with the safety of a food, not necessarily its quality, a food marketed after it’s “sell by” date is not a violation to be marked as long as the food is still in sound condition.

Although out dated foods may not be a food safety issue, foods with short or expired dates may soon become unsafe. Inspectors should question operators about

their purchasing and storage practices. Typically manufacturers don’t want their products sold that don’t meet quality expectations.

Some manufacturers use Julian dates (days of the year numbered from 1 to 365) usually coupled with a processing plant code and the year. Here is an easy conversion chart.

<u>Julian day</u>	<u>Month</u>
001-031	Jan
032-059	Feb
060-090	Mar
091-120	Apr
121-151	May
152-181	Jun
182-212	Jul
213-243	Aug
244-273	Sep
274-304	Oct
305-334	Nov
335-365	Dec

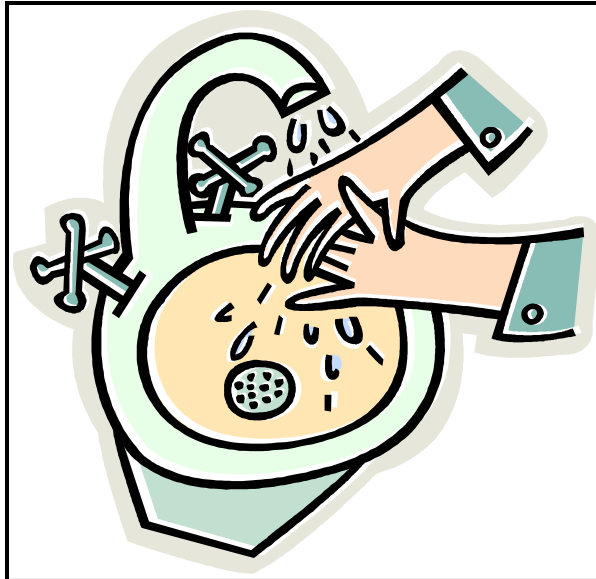
## Handwashing signage play showing up again

Hoosier restaurant operators are once again reporting receiving official-looking letters from an entity calling itself the “Indiana Food Service Compliance Center.” The business gives a Speedway, Indiana address.

The letter outlines some of the requirements under Indiana Code for handwashing by food employees but does not mention 410 IAC 7-24, known as the Food Code.

The letter then says in part, “...to improve compliance with the Indiana Food Protection Program hand washing requirement, please respond to the order form below...” This is in bold type. Someone not reading the letter carefully might conclude that having handwashing signs is a requirement.

The letter also implies that



**Despite advertising letters implying otherwise, signs at handwashing sinks advising employees to wash hands are not required in Indiana food establishments.**

“ISDH” inspectors may be inspecting and citing violations at local establishments. This is not the case. Local health departments will still be responsible for conducting all inspections within their jurisdictions, although they may be accompanied by their ISDH regional representative for training purposes.

poses.

Local health department inspectors should advise their local retail food establishment operators that they may purchase such signs if they wish, but there is no legal requirement for them to do so. Many local health departments provide a variety of food safety-related signage free to establishments in their jurisdictions. The Indiana State Department of Health also can supply various signs covering food safety and personal hygiene.

A company with a similar name and address sent out letters to Indiana food retailers in 2006. That time, the letter to retailers quoted information from FDA’s Model Code that does mention hand wash signage and added that businesses in violation might be subject to a \$2,500 fine.

Any changes to Indiana laws affecting Indiana’s food establishments will be posted on the ISDH Food Protection web site, and local health departments will be notified by letter and e-mail.

## Second Indiana incubator kitchen being planned

There may be another incubator kitchen facility available soon for food entrepreneurs. “The Seed Kitchen & Café” plans to open in Hamilton County, if corporate partners and investors can be found.

This facility will have an added twist. There will be a “retail store”

available where vendors can sell their products. Plus, a 40-seat dining area will be available, suitable for meetings and lunches.



This would be Indiana’s second such facility. The Ohio River Valley Food Venture has operated in Madison, for several years.

Both would meet the food code requirement for an approved facility.

## FDA lowers acceptable lead level in kids' candy

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recommended that the acceptable level of lead in candy products likely to be consumed by children be dropped to 0.1 PPM. The current allowable limit is 0.5 PPM. In addition, FDA says it is prepared to begin enforcement action against any candy maker whose product shows a lead level above 0.1.

FDA believes this goal is achievable if manufacturers use “good manufacturing practices”

while making candy and candy ingredients. FDA also is reiterating its enforcement policy against lead-based inks used in candy wrappers, because of the distinct possibility of lead migrating from the label to the candy it touches.

FDA says this 0.1 standard is consistent with its longstanding goal of reducing lead levels in the food supply to reduce consumers' lead exposure to the lowest level that can be practicably obtained.

Unacceptable levels were

found last year in candy products imported from Mexico and in some equipment used in manufacturing frozen food products.



## Inside Story Headline

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is holding public hearings to share information and perhaps reach conclusions on how to make produce safer and reduce the chance of future outbreaks.

The hearings are intended to share information about the recent outbreaks of foodborne illness that were connected to microbial contamination of fresh produce. FDA also hopes to solicit comments, data, and other scientific information about current agricultural and manufacturing practices used to produce, harvest, pack, cool, process, and transport fresh produce.

FDA also wants input on risk factors for contamination of fresh produce associated with these practices and what FDA could do to enhance safety.

Among the issues FDA wants

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Among the issues FDA wants to address is whether fresh water used in processing is ever sampled and tested.

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to address include whether fresh water used in processing is ever sampled and tested, and what current practices are in place to reduce the risk of microbial contamination.

One hearing is set for California and a second in Maryland.



### What about pre-washed produce?

All fresh produce must be washed in potable water. Failure to do so is a violation under Sec. 175 of the food code.

Cut produce in packages clearly labeled “pre-washed” or “ready to eat” do not require additional washing if used right after opening. However, washing such produce again would provide an additional safety step.

Once a bag of washed produce is opened, and not used immediately, it should be washed just prior to using.

All cut produce should be inspected, and any product with an off odor or appearance should not be used.



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health departments.*

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## Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs

Send your questions to the e-mail or postal address above.

- ◆ Remember that the reheating requirement of 165° F. for food that has been properly cooked and cooled applies only if the food is to be hot-held. It is not a violation to serve "cold" food. As long as the temperature controls have been maintained up to the point of service, food may be served at any temperature.
- ◆ Dan Gala has joined the Food Protection Program, filling the position formerly held by Heather Vaughn. Dan has more than 20 years experience in commercial food processing and at one time had his own ice cream business. He will be the main contact for

food-related complaints and samples. Reach him at 317.233.7366.

- ◆ "T-Sticks" can be used to test the final rinse utensil temperature of a dish machine. Just be sure the use instructions say it is safe for use at dish machine sanitizing temperatures and it will register 160°F.
- ◆ Any hot topics you would like to hear more about in next year's ISDH Food Symposium? Share your ideas with

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### Calendar

ISDH Orientation  
Dec. 4, 5, 6, 2007 at ISDH

Seafood HACCP  
Coming in 2008

ISDH Food Symposium  
Coming in 2008