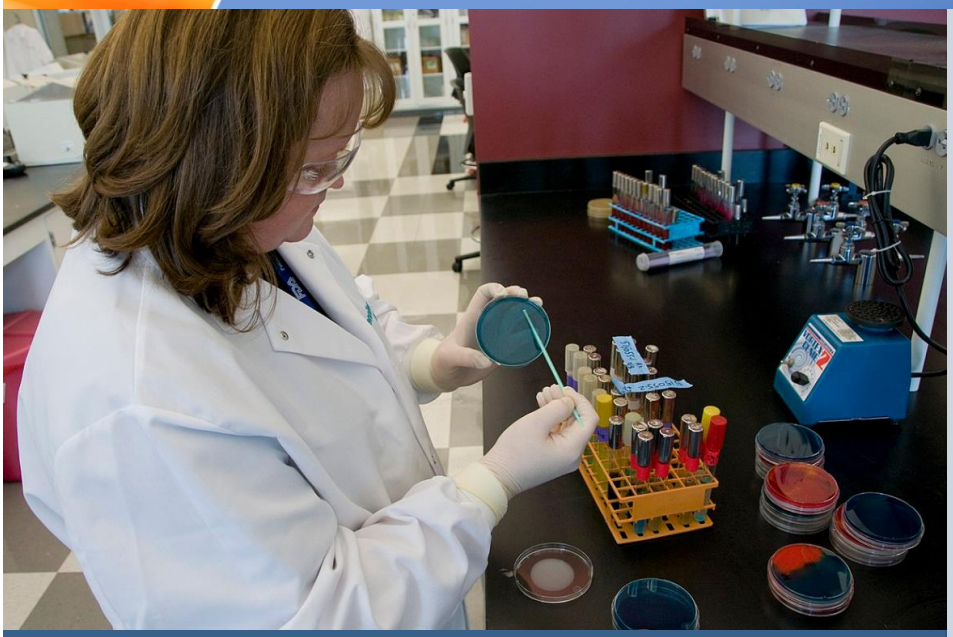
The Sentinel

Newsletter of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team



US Food and Drug Administration scientist tests for presence of Salmonella

FDA Investigated Multistate Outbreak of Salmonella Adelaide Infections Linked to Pre-Cut Melons

Last month, the FDA, CDC, along with state and local officials investigated a multi-state outbreak of Salmonella Adelaide infections. Epidemiologic and preliminary traceback evidence indicated that pre-cut melon distributed by Caito Foods, LLC was a likely source of this outbreak. Caito Foods, LLC has voluntarily recalled their products, to prevent further distribution of potentially contaminated products.

The recalled products were packaged in clear, plastic clamshell containers and distributed to Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

The FDA worked with state partners to trace back the pre-cut melons to identify the source of the pathogen, to determine the full distribution of the pre-cut melons, and to learn more about how the contamination occurred. No common source was identified.

CDC reports that there were 77 cases in nine states with 36 hospitalizations. Illnesses started on dates ranging from April 30, 2018, to July 2, 2018. Ill people ranged in age from less than 1 year to 97, with a median age of 67. Sixty-seven percent are female. Out of 70 people with information available, 36 (51%) were hospitalized. No deaths were reported.

Read more at:
https://tinyurl.com/y7apt6zk

Special Features of this Issue:

- *Tabletop Exercise Held to Address Chronic Wasting Disease in Florida*
- *UF Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (VETS) Team Update*
- *The FLIRRT Report: A special section dedicated to feed and food emergency planning and response*

"We are committed to protecting lives, homes and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfire both at home and nationwide."

— Adam Putnam, Commissioner
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
See page 4 for the story.

UF Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (VETS) Team Update

The University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine is a lead member of the Florida State Agriculture Response Team (SART). As a "quick strike" resource, the college has been tasked to assist the state in response to animal and agricultural disasters whenever an emergency has been officially declared by the state or federal government.

Last month, UF VETS were activated to respond to an emergency in Marion County, Florida. Marion County Fire Rescue requested aid from the UF VETS team in response to a small horse who had wandered into a hayloft. Tight corners and a narrow stairwell provided unique challenges, but the mare was able to be sedated, packaged onto a rescue glide, and safely relocated outside on ground level.

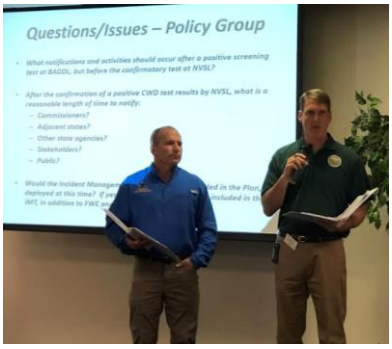
To learn more about UF VETS, please visit:
https://www.vetmed.ufl.edu/about-the-college/administration/directors-office/about-vets/

Looking for Pet-Friendly Sheltering Resources?

The SART website has posted new, valuable resources for pet-friendly sheltering.

For all the details, visit: https://flsart.org/jsp/petfriendly

FDACS, FWC and FDOH Hold a Tabletop Exercise on Chronic Wasting Disease in Florida



On August 1 and 2, a tabletop exercise on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Florida was held at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) in Tallahassee. Sponsoring agencies were FDACS, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Florida Department of Health. Over 50 participants attended the exercise with representatives from FDACS, FWC, FDOH, USDA, and Florida's cervid industry stakeholders (Captive Cervid Technical Assistance Group [CTAG] and Deer Management Technical Assistance Group [DMTAG]).

CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy of cervids caused by an abnormal protein called a prion. CWD has been diagnosed in mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, elk, reindeer, and sika deer. The disease is always fatal with death occurring weeks to months after clinical signs become evident. Currently, CWD has not been detected in Florida or in adjoining states.

The purpose of the tabletop exercise was to provide an opportunity to exercise and evaluate the *Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance and Detection Response Plan for Cervids in Florida*, referred to as the "Plan."

See *Tabletop Exercise*, page 7.

Counties, Please Update Your Contact Information on FLSART.org

Please review your county emergency contact information at http://flsart.org/SART/choosecountyforview. If you need to make changes to your county contact information, please send a request to LeiAnna Tucker at LeiAnna.Tucker@FreshFromFlorida.com.

During an emergency, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services provides necessary food and water to affected areas and helps protect animals and agriculture. The Department's Florida Forest Service is responsible for incident management and assists emergency responders in clearing debris and distributing supplies. Additionally, the Department's Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement provides law enforcement services to police departments and county sheriff's offices as necessary.

For more information and tips on hurricane preparedness, visit FloridaDisaster.org.

In the News

Short stories and updates from around the state…

$340 million federal block grant designed to help Florida citrus growers get back on their feet. After experiencing one of the worst citrus seasons in decades, the USDA plans to distribute money through the 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program.
Read more: http://floridapolitics.com/archives/269147-rick-scott-pressures-lawmakers-to-ok-citrus-grant

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)
Neurologic clinical signs began on July 10 and 14 for two EEE cases confirmed this week in Clay and Suwannee Counties, respectively. Both horses were euthanized due to a poor prognosis. To date in 2018, there have been 46 reported cases of EEE in Florida. EEE is an infectious, viral disease that is maintained in bird reservoirs, transmitted by mosquitoes, and oftentimes causes fatal neurological diseases in mammals.

Florida Forest Service Deploys team to California
A Type 6 Engine Strike Team has been deployed to assist with the significant wildfire activity in California. "We are committed to protecting lives, homes and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfire both at home and nationwide," said Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam.
Read more: https://www.freshfromflorida.com/News-Events/Press-Releases/2018-Press-Releases/Florida-Forest-Service-Sending-Additional-Personnel-Equipment-to-Help-Battle-California-Wildfires

SART Steering Committee Meeting
The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for August 9, 2018, at the USDA Farm Service Agency. This meeting is exclusively for members of the SART Steering Committee.

A Toxic Tide Is Killing Florida Wildlife
As the New York Times reports, "This year, an overgrowth in the waters off the state's southwestern coast is killing wildlife and making some beaches noxious." The algae results from stagnant water, high temperatures, and fertilizer runoff.
Read more: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/30/climate/florida-red-tide-algae.html

Did You Know? 'Securing our Agriculture and Food' Act Became Law

Last year, President Donald Trump signed H.R. 1238, also called the "Securing our Agriculture and Food Act," to coordinate efforts to defend U.S. food, agriculture and veterinary systems against terrorism.

According to GovTrack.us, the act "amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to authorize a program to coordinate the Department of Homeland Security's efforts related to food, agriculture, and veterinary defense from acts of terrorism and other high-consequence events that pose a risk to homeland security."

As part of this effort, the law provides obligations including:

- Providing oversight and management of the Department's responsibilities pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9–Defense of United States Agriculture and Food.
- Providing oversight and integration of the Department's activities related to veterinary public health, food defense, and agricultural security.
- Leading the Department's policy initiatives relating to food, animal, and agricultural incidents, and the impact of such incidents on animal and public health.
- Leading the Department's policy initiatives relating to overall domestic preparedness for and collective response to agricultural terrorism.
- Coordinating with other Department components, including U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as appropriate, on activities related to food and agriculture security and screening procedures for domestic and imported products.
- Coordinating with appropriate Federal departments and agencies.

As Food Safety News reported, "This is not the first legislative reaction to agro-terrorism concerns. After 9/11, Congress in 2002 required all food production facilities to register with the Food and Drug Administration. In 2010, Congress approved the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) with a rule requiring certain companies to develop food defense plans."

Read more at:

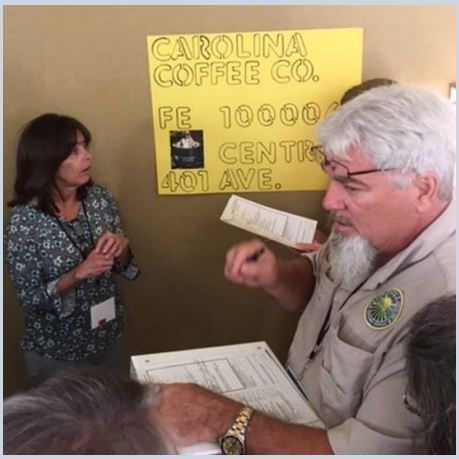
https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr1238/text

https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2017/06/president-trump-likely-to-sign-popular-agro-terrorism-bill/

The FLIRRT Report

A special section dedicated to feed and food emergency planning and response.

Florida's Integrated Rapid Response Team (FLIRRT) is a multi-agency coordination group responding to feed and food emergency under the Rapid Response Team Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Cooperative Grant Program. FLIRRT consists of technical experts in food manufacturing, food inspection, environmental health, and epidemiology. FLIRRT is an active partner in Emergency Support Function 11 (Food and Water) at Florida's State Emergency Operations Center. For more information, please visit: https://www.freshfromflorida.com/FLIRRT



- FLIRRT regulatory partners in addition to industry partners conducted a panel session "Food Safety and Hurricanes - The Eye Storm" at the International Association of Food Protection Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah on July 11, 2018. Discussions included how the state regulatory agencies prepare for hurricanes, FDA's response to Hurricane Maria, and the industry's preparation and response to hurricanes. Panelists included Dr. Daniel Okenu with HEB Grocery Company, Michael Roberson with Publix Supermarkets, Dr. Elizabeth Ormond with US Food and Drug Administration, Jamie DeMent with the Florida Department of Health, and Summer Williams with FDACS.

- FDACS Division of Food Safety held its annual division meeting the week of July 16 in Altamonte Springs, Florida. Over 170 employees participated in a small rapid response team exercise. The exercise scenario included a small tornado from "Tropical Storm Putnam" affected a small beachside area in Palm Beach County. Participants were broken down into strike teams and interview store owners to conduct assessments on the damages.

- Dairy Program receives training on Survey 123 GIS program: With the newest addition of GIS to FLIRRT's response planning, the next step is finding a way to capture data anytime and anywhere without the use of pen and paper. With the Survey123 for ArcGIS application, you can use your smartphone, laptop, or desktop and design a survey that speeds up the collection process with predefined questions that use logic and provide easy-to-fill answers. FLIRRT is using the Dairy Program as a test demo for assessment data collection. At the annual division meeting in July, Sara Wander conducted training on Survey 123. Our hope is that we can use Survey 123 for daily work and not just emergency response assessment data.

- Product Sampling Online Training Modules go live!: FLIRRT has completed the production of three product sampling training modules. The modules cover training on collecting the sample from the retailer, packing the sample and shipping the sample to the laboratory for testing. These sampling modules will be shared with the food safety regulatory community nationwide.

Tabletop Exercise (continued)

The tabletop exercise addressed the mission area of Response while focusing on core capabilities of 1) Public Information and Warning, 2) Operational Coordination, and 3) Operational Communication.

It also evaluated the following five objectives:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan in providing guidance to the participating agencies/technical assistance groups in a simulated CWD outbreak in Florida.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan in providing guidance to the participating agencies/technical assistance groups in a simulated CWD outbreak in Florida.
3. Evaluate the ability of the participating agencies/technical assistance groups to work jointly on a coordinated response for a simulated CWD outbreak in Florida.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of participating agencies' public information officers to support a simulated Joint Information Center and prepare joint public messaging.
5. Identify errors, gaps and/or deficiencies in the Plan during the exercise, hotwash and through evaluations.

The tabletop exercise consisted of a Plan overview, five modules, and four breakout groups: Public Information Officer Group, Policy Group, Field Group, and Stakeholder Group (CTAG and DMTAG).

Please log in and update your membership information online at:

www.FLSART.org

About the *SART Sentinel*

The *SART Sentinel* is an email newsletter prepared monthly by the members of the **Florida State Agricultural Response Team**. Past issues of the *Sentinel* are archived on the Florida SART website at www.flsart.org.

If you have a story or photo that you would like to have considered for publication in the *SART Sentinel*, please contact the editors.

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