



Consumer Federation of America

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New Foodborne Illness Surveillance Data Shows Progress on Reducing Foodborne Illness Remains Stalled Administration Should Release Delayed Food Safety Rules

Administration Should Release Delayed Food Safety Rules

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention this weekend quietly posted the [most recent surveillance data](#) on the incidence of foodborne illness for 2011. The preliminary data indicates that progress on reducing foodborne illnesses remains stalled, and for most of the major pathogens, seems to be moving in the wrong direction. Compared to 2006-2008 period, illnesses from Campylobacter, Salmonella and Listeria have increased while illnesses from E. coli O157:H7 have decreased.

This data further emphasizes the need for FDA to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act, which was signed into law in January 2010 and shifts FDA's food safety program from one of reaction to prevention. The FDA has proposed regulations to implement four major components of the law – produce safety, preventive controls for food and animal feed and import safety – yet the rules are now seven months overdue and have been delayed by the Obama Administration. The Administration should immediately release the rules so that FDA can move forward on implementation of the new law.

The CDC reports that illnesses from E. coli O157:H7 have increased slightly to 0.98 cases per 100,000 population while illnesses from non-O157:H7 STECs have increased to 1.08 cases per 100,000. As has been noted previously by CDC, the rate of illness from non-O157:H7 STECs is now higher than the rate from E. coli O157:H7. No progress has been seen on Listeria illnesses, which are at 0.28 cases per 100,000.

Salmonella illnesses have decreased slightly to 16.47 cases per 100,000 yet there has been little progress in reducing illnesses from Salmonella since CDC has been conducting surveillance on the pathogen. Campylobacter illnesses have increased to 14.31 cases per 100,000 population and is now at its highest rate since the year 2000. Salmonella and Campylobacter illnesses are frequently associated with consumption of raw or undercooked poultry. This lack of progress in reducing illnesses from these pathogens is particularly concerning as the Food Safety and Inspection Service has proposed a new inspection program for poultry, yet the agency has almost no data on how the program will actually affect Campylobacter rates on poultry. The agency's proposal also does not require poultry plants to test for Salmonella and Campylobacter, significantly limiting the agency's ability to assure that poultry plants are reducing contamination from these pathogens.

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Consumer Federation of America is a nonprofit association of nearly 300 consumer organizations founded in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy.