

Food Safety Begins on the Farm: A Grower Self Assessment of Food Safety Risks



Onions suspected in hepatitis outbreak

ATLANTA (AP) — Green onions are believed to be the source of hepatitis A outbreaks that sickened more than 280 people in Georgia and Tennessee last month, health officials said Tuesday.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is still trying to determine where the onions originated, said Richard Quartarone, a spokesman for the Georgia Division of Public Health.

Georgia typically sees about 50 cases of the infection each month, but 210 people who ate at restaurants in the Atlanta metro area were sickened in September. Seventy-three people were infected in Knoxville, Tenn.

Health officials would not name the restaurants involved.

Early findings indicate the two states experienced different strains of the infection, Quartarone said. Water, contaminated from multiple sources, could contain several different strains of the virus.

Crisis Management



Crisis Management

Any number of events could be classified as a crisis. These events almost always have negative consequences for farm operations and experience suggests that a crisis usually occurs with very little warning. A crisis requires an immediate response and may involve interacting with local, state and/or federal govern-

ment agencies, the media and possibly a prolonged interruption of normal operations on your farm. The best time to deal with a crisis is before one occurs, through careful planning and preparation. The best way to prepare is to develop a crisis management plan. Having a plan in advance of a crisis allows a more immediate response and an immediate response allows you to more effectively manage the crisis as well as government agencies, media and public perception of your operation.

As with all GAPs, the primary focus is on preventing problems to avoid a crisis. A comprehensive food safety plan should include how to deal with a crisis. A crisis management plan should include comprehensive lists of your support staff and organizations, trade organization contacts, farm experts at land grant institutions, cooperative extension educators and others who can provide assistance on scientific issues, media contacts, and strategies to address the emergency without compromising your total business. Your leadership and time will be needed in the event of a crisis. Be sure that all employees know about the plan and know who to contact in the event of an emergency or a crisis. Many farm and grower organizations have crisis management manuals that provide useful information on the development of a crisis management plan for your operation.

This worksheet will highlight these and other considerations to help you be prepared for a crisis.

- A description of the crisis management team
- Emergency service phone numbers
- The designated spokesperson for the farm
- Names and phone numbers of priority contacts (e.g. lawyers, owners, brokers, consultants, scientific experts)
- List of supporting industry and grower organizations
- List of farm operations that can be suspended to allow time to deal with a crisis
- Crisis management training for employees

Crisis Management

Good Agricultural Practices

Practices Requiring Attention





Management Area	Best Practice	Minor Adjustments Needed	Concerns Exist; Examine Practice	Needs Improvement: Prioritize Changes Here
Crisis management training and planning	Farm owner/operator has received crisis management training and a written crisis management plan is in place.	Farm owner/operator has received crisis management training and has described a crisis management plan.		No one on the farm has had crisis management training. No plans for managing a crisis are in place.
Media training	The farm has several individuals who have media training and who are familiar with farming operations to be able to answer questions from the media. These individuals are familiar with all farm food safety protocols that are in place to prevent problems.	The farm has at least one person trained to respond to the media who is familiar with the operation and understands the food safety protocols.	At least one person on the farm has media training, but this person is not familiar with farm food safety protocols and could not highlight proactive approaches used on the farm.	No one on the farm has media training.
Crisis management team	The farm has a crisis management team designated and a plan to assign employees to different tasks should a crisis occur. Each critical person has a backup.	A crisis management team has been outlined and a plan to assign employees to different tasks should a crisis occur BUT each critical person does not have a backup.	A crisis management team has been designated BUT there is no plan for employees to follow. Each critical person does not have a backup.	No crisis management team has been identified.

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Management Area	Best Practice	Minor Adjustments Needed	Concerns Exist; Examine Practice	Needs Improvement: Prioritize Changes Here
Employee training	Standard employee training includes discussion of the crisis management plan and employee responsibilities in the event of a crisis.	Standard employee training includes discussion of the crisis management plan but does not include employee responsibilities during a crisis.		Employee training does not include crisis management.
Farm operations priority list 	The crisis management plan outlines which operations must continue and those which can be temporarily halted during a crisis.		There is a sense of which operations can be temporarily halted in the event of a crisis, but this has not been written down.	There has been no consideration of those farm operations which could be halted in event of a crisis.
Priority contacts 	The crisis management plan includes a list of all priority contacts that support or provide services to the farm in the event of a crisis, including lawyers, grower organizations, state health officials and vendors.		There is a sense of who should be contacted in the event of a crisis, but this has not been written down.	There has been no consideration of key organizations or individuals who will support or provide services to the farm during a crisis.
Testing crisis management plan	A mock crisis has been conducted to insure the plan is effective.		A mock crisis has been discussed, but implementation of the plan has not been tested.	There is no crisis plan.

Crisis Management Action Plan

Date: _____ Reviewer: _____ Field or Commodity: _____

Management Area	Best Practice	Minor Adjustment	Concerns Exist	Prioritize Changes Here	Your Plans to Reduce Risks			
					Action for Improvement	Person Responsible	Estimated Cost	Target Date
Crisis management training and planning								
Media training								
Crisis management team								
Employee training								
Farm operations priority list								

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Management Area	Best Practice	Minor Adjustment	Concerns Exist	Prioritize Changes Here	Your Plans to Reduce Risks			
					Action for Improvement	Person Responsible	Estimated Cost	Target Date
Priority contacts								
Testing crisis management plan								