

Outbreaks	Government	Farm to Fork
<p>Norovirus California Health officials report that 62 of about 200 people attending an event at Hotel Sofitel were infected with the highly contagious norovirus. Health officials said that those who fell ill contracted the virus through either the salmon or chicken and that no one consuming the vegetarian entrée fell sick. Inspectors found evidence that the staff was re-using dirty towels to wipe down tables, food being kept too hot or too cold (<i>not an factor in NoV RC</i>) and a dishwasher who was touching clean dishes directly after touching dirty dishes.</p> <p>Salmonella Turtles-USA A strain of salmonella carried by small pet turtles has sickened more than 100 people and hospitalized at least 24 nationwide in 33 states reporting cases to the U.S. Centers for Disease mostly in California, Texas, Pennsylvania and Illinois. Most of the patients have been children. No one has died in the outbreak, which began in August 2007. Some patients have experienced severe symptoms, including acute kidney failure.</p> <p>Gastroenteritis Water Florida More than one in 10 people who drank Palm Beach city water contaminated with fecal bacteria said they got sick, according to a survey released by the Palm Beach County Health Department. The more unheated tap water that residents drank the more likely they were to say they felt ill. Twelve percent of those interviewed said they had symptoms such as diarrhea, stomach pain and nausea. Of those, six said they sought medical treatment. The city's water test results were positive for fecal coliform and E. coli bacteria.</p>	<p>FDA Crisis The U.S. Food and Drug Administration former chief counsel, Peter Barton Hutt, told a Congressional panel that the F.D.A. was "barely hanging on by its fingertips. Several authoritative reports and other experts supported Hutt. A high turnover rate of scientists, a decrepit information technology system, a weak organizational structure, and a shrinking inspection force further the problems. The Government Accountability Office reports the agency does not have enough staff or adequate computer systems to conduct timely inspections. The agency would take 1,900 years to inspect every foreign food plant. The reason for the agency's woes is simple. More than 100 statutes have added new responsibilities over the past 20 years — without providing enough money and personnel to carry out the tasks. To make things worse, the flood of food and drug ingredients from abroad have overwhelmed the agency's ability to keep up.</p> <p>Florida Worst in Outbreaks Healthinspections.com found 77 outbreaks in Florida last year, the most of any state. Bill Veach, the director of the Division of Hotels and Restaurants said Florida has so many cases of food poisoning because we have so many restaurants. Roy Costa, a former state health inspector claimed Florida has a higher number of food borne illnesses because of how our restaurants are inspected, stating, "The inspection system we have in Florida is broken. It's severely broken. It's not just 'needs tweaking', it needs real fixing." Costa says every restaurant should have a written food safety plan, and that, "Restaurants need to be held responsible for sanitation 24-7, not just when the inspector walks in the door! When consumers go to a restaurant, they're really rolling the dice!" Not so, says Mr. Veach.</p>	<p>Law Firm in Public Health Role A Seattle law firm wants to find out if ground beef is contaminated with harmful strains of E. coli bacteria that federal inspectors don't look for. The firm of Marler and Clark, which specializes in litigating cases involving food-borne illnesses, recently announced plans to test 5,000 beef samples over the course of a year. Marler-Clark will turn positive samples over to CDC. The government and beef industry have focused their testing on a single strain of E. coli known as O157:H7, but several other similar strains also cause severe illness. Richard Raymond, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's undersecretary for food safety, said he supported the law firm's testing plan. He said the department could not afford to do its own testing.</p> <p>Raw Milk Sales Vermont A new bill in the Vermont legislature would allow farmers to sell unlimited amounts of raw milk directly to consumers. Supporters say it will provide extra income for farmers. Currently there are limits to how much raw milk farmers can sell because of health concerns. The bill would set up new health standards, including regular testing of the milk and labeling requirements. Farmers would also have to keep a list of who buys it. (<i>Raw milk results in hundreds of severe illnesses every year and many states ban sales RC</i>)</p> <p>Orlando Area School Pests Rats and roaches infest Orlando area schools. Inspection reports from the last year reviewed by the Palm Beach Post revealed more than a dozen schools with 60 violations. School District leaders are trying to reduce the number of bad inspections. They now have two inspectors for every 30 schools who check on schools everyday. A spokesperson said, "We really focus in on the very necessary things, hand-washing, wearing gloves, restraining the hair, labeling the food." (<i>What about Pest control? RC</i>)</p>