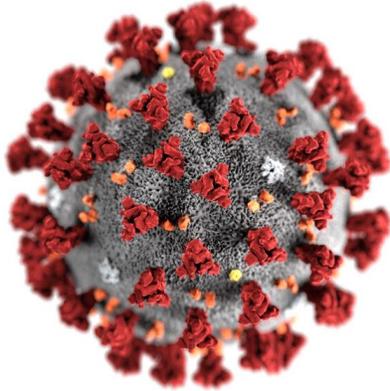


CORONAVIRUS

Texas Foodborne Epidemiology and COVID-19 Response

Provided by irina.cody@dshs.texas.gov



The COVID-19 pandemic has affected foodborne epidemiology surveillance and response on both State and local levels. In March 2020, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Foodborne Epidemiology Team - Central Office/Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit (EAIDU) in Austin had their duties nearly fully shifted to COVID activities. This provided very limited epidemiology response to foodborne surveillance in Texas. The Foodborne Team responded mostly to conditions such as immediately notified Botulism and Listeriosis, and also followed up on cases from multi-state foodborne outbreaks notified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since many local and regional health departments did not have, or had very limited resources to investigate foodborne illness, many cases in these outbreaks were lost to follow up. Additionally, the number of the reported foodborne illness cases and local foodborne outbreaks dropped during that period as well. The annual data clean-up activities for 2019 for notifiable conditions on state, local, and regional levels were postponed and submission to the CDC was delayed.

In the middle of summer, the EAIDU hired a group of contactors to provide help with COVID activities and different types of backlogs. Since that time, the foodborne team in Central Office/EAIDU was able to spend the half of their daily work duties on regular foodborne surveillance and another half on COVID response, while working alternative shifts.

When resources allow, the foodborne team staff provides help to local health departments, if requested. To help with the workload burden, the CDC extended this year deadlines for such activities as submitting Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity grant information, 2019 annual data for notifiable conditions, and also offered help with interviewing cases that are part of multi-state foodborne outbreaks.



COVID-19 Resources & Links

[Association of Food and Drug Officials \(AFDO\) Coronavirus Website](#)

The AFDO COVID-19 website contains a wealth of information with new resources and updated information posted continuously.

- [AFDO Best Practices for Conducting Inspections During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Best Practices for Conducting Produce Farm Inspections During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Interviewing Food Workers and Managers in an Outbreak Investigation Webinar](#)

New York Food Safety Center of Excellence has posted a recorded webinar given by Professor Martin Wiedmann from Cornell University on September 16th, 2020. This topic of this webinar is best practices for conducting interviews with food workers and managers during an outbreak investigation.

[CDC Considerations for Restaurants and Bars](#)

CDC offers considerations for ways in which operators can protect employees, customers, and communities and slow the spread of COVID-19, as restaurants and bars resume operations in some areas of the United States.

[FDA Industry FAQs: Animal Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

This page features frequently asked questions from members of the animal food industry related to Coronavirus Disease 2019

[USDA COVID-19 Federal Resource Matrix for Rural Communities](#)

USDA and its Federal partners have programs that can be used to provide immediate and long-term assistance to rural communities affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

[University of California Davis Food Safety COVID-19 Resources](#)

This page provides COVID-19 guidance for food consumers, industry, farms, and retail in English, Spanish, and Mandarin.

Texas Rapid Response Team Agency COVID-19 Resource Pages

- [Office of the Texas State Chemist](#)
- [Texas Department of State Health Services](#)
- [Texas Department of Agriculture](#)
- [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)