

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Environmental Health Section

EHS Circular Letter #2018-02b

UPDATED

To: Local Health Departments

From: Tracey Weeks, MS, RS
Supervisor, Food Protection Program

Date: May 10, 2018

Subject: Multi-State *E. coli* O157 Outbreak Associated with Romaine Lettuce

Yesterday, CDC and FDA provided updates on the investigation of the multi-state *E.coli* O157 outbreak associated with romaine lettuce. CDC has modified their advice to consumers as follows:

“Do not eat or buy romaine lettuce unless you can confirm it is not from the Yuma growing region. Romaine lettuce has a shelf life of several weeks and contaminated lettuce could still be in homes, stores, and restaurants.” (Emphasis added.)

Information on the growing region may not be readily available in which case consumers should avoid the product. Additional information will be provided when released by FDA and CDC.

The investigation is ongoing and the number of cases have increased nationally to 148, however the number of Connecticut cases remains at 2.

Inquiries from consumers who believe they may be ill from consuming romaine lettuce should contact their medical provider.

Both CDC and FDA updated their websites yesterday. FDA’s update is included here:



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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local partners, are investigating a multistate outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 illnesses linked to romaine lettuce from the Yuma growing region.

Update

The FDA has received confirmation from the Arizona Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement administered by the Arizona Department of Agriculture that romaine lettuce is no longer being produced and distributed from the Yuma growing region, reducing the potential for exposure to contaminated product. However, due to the 21-day shelf life, we cannot be certain that romaine lettuce from this region is no longer in the supply chain.

The FDA is continuing to investigate illnesses related to romaine lettuce from the Yuma growing region. We are working to identify multiple distribution channels that can explain the entirety of the nation-wide outbreak and are tracing back from multiple groupings of ill people located in diverse geographic areas.

The FDA has identified one farm as the source of the whole-head romaine lettuce that sickened several people at a correctional facility in Alaska. However, the agency has not determined where in the supply chain the contamination occurred. The agency is examining all possibilities, including that contamination may have occurred at any point along the growing, harvesting, packaging, and distribution chain before reaching the Alaska correctional facility where it was served.

All of the lettuce in question from this farm was harvested during March 5-16 and is past its 21-day shelf life. Because the growing season in the Yuma region is at its end, the farm is not growing any lettuce at this time.

Most of the illnesses in this outbreak are not linked to romaine lettuce from this farm, and are associated with chopped romaine lettuce. The agency is investigating dozens of other fields as potential sources of the chopped romaine lettuce and will share information as it becomes available.

To date, the FDA also has no evidence that other types of lettuce, or romaine lettuce grown outside of the Yuma growing region, are involved in this outbreak.

For additional information please visit:

FDA: <https://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm604254.htm>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/ecoli/2018/o157h7-04-18/index.html>