



# Utah RAPID RESPONSE Team

Human and Animal Food

Official Newsletter of the Utah Rapid Response Team (URRT)

## Monthly Review- February 2020

Here are the highlights of what happened with the URRT in the month February:



- The URRT attended the Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Alliance (MFRPA) Conference held in Spokane, WA. Prior to the MFRPA Conference Thayne Mickelson, Talisha Bacon, and Rick Beckstrand were able to meet with their RRT mentor state, which is Washington State. We were able to meet two times while in WA with our mentor state. The first time was to do a tour where WA has their RRT Go-Kits and talk about lessons learned from how they set up their Go-Kits; the URRT will need to start putting together Go-Kits within the next few months for the URRT. This was a huge benefit for the URRT to see firsthand the Go-Kits; what has worked and what has not worked for the state of WA. The second meeting with our Mentor State was to have a formal meeting about where we are as an RRT in Utah, the projects we were working on, and how WA can help us. Also, during the MFRPA Conference Thayne and Talisha gave a presentation at the “Speed Education Session” on how MFRPS and the URRT are working together through the URRT Steering Committee, Sharing of Policies, FoodCORE, Budgeting and Purchasing, and Training.

- We also had our ESF 11 coordination meeting where we discussed the scope, roles, training, outreach, and responsibilities of being at the ESF 11 desk.
- The RRT was involved with FDA partners with a status update on the current E-Coli outbreak due to clover sprouts with Jimmy Johns. Thank you to everyone who attended the Steering Committee in February. We are moving forward on our website, and the ER 220 course.

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## Steering Committee Spotlight - Chris Nelson

**1. Describe your job in about 25 words?** The Environmental Health program at UDOH manages the rules for sanitation in many areas for the State of Utah, with food safety being a major priority.

**2. What's one thing - industry-related you learned in the last year?** It was surprising, and reassuring, to find out the large retail food suppliers had plans in place in case of emergencies and disaster relief.

**3. What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?** I don't know all the answers, but I am in a unique position with the time, contacts, and resources to find answers. I especially enjoy finding answers to all the weird questions which come from inspectors who happen upon the newest/latest thing in food preparation.

**4. What is one thing unique about you that people would be surprised if they knew?** I have a passion for sous-vide and the science behind it. I cook using sous-vide at home, with a 70% success rate.

**5. How has your agency been influenced by the partnership with the URRT?** Making new contacts and being able to be a part of a larger effort has been gratifying.

**6. What is your favorite quote or personal mantra?** From GI Joe: "Knowing is half the battle"

## Steering Committee

Talisha Bacon  
URRT Coordinator

Thayne Mickelson  
URRT Director

### FDA

Holly Miller (Primary)  
Nathan Moon (Alternate)

### LHD

Michelle Cooke

UDAF Manufactured Food  
Rick Beckstrand (Primary)  
Jay Schvaneveldt (Alternate)

UDAF Animal and Feed  
Mark Ashcroft (Primary)  
Landen Kidd (Alternate)

UDAF Lab  
Western Judd (Primary)  
Kathleen Thorsted  
(Alternate)

UDOH Epi.  
Cindy Burnett (Primary)  
Delany Moore (Alternate)

UDOH  
Chris Nelson (Primary)  
Karl Hartman (Alternate)

UPHL  
Robyn Atkinson (Primary)  
Kelly Oakeson (Alternate)

USDA-FSIS  
Keith Banta (Primary)  
Willy Lanier (Alternate)

## Steering Committee Spotlight -Weston Judd

**1. Describe your job in about 25 words?** I am the director of the laboratory division at the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. In that position, I oversee laboratory operations and authorize laboratory testing reports. The work we do involves chemical and microbiological testing on various types of agricultural products to determine regulatory compliance, label compliance, and safety (e.g., testing for pesticides, toxins, and microbial contamination).

**2. What's one thing - industry-related you learned in the last year?** Although it's not specific to food safety, I've learned a lot about cannabis in the last year, both in regard to laboratory testing and other aspects, including the multitude of chemical compounds produced by the plant. Microbial and other contaminant testing is an aspect of cannabis testing, so it is relatable to food safety.

**3. What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?** I like that my job involves multiple areas of laboratory analysis and involves many different types of samples. For example, our lab performs analyses on samples including dairy, animal feeds, fertilizers, and cannabis. With that breadth of work, there is always something new to learn.

**4. What is one thing unique about you that people would be surprised if they knew?** Even though I currently manage a lab that conducts microbial and analytical testing, I am an organic/medicinal chemist by training and prior experience. Before I came to UDAF, I worked as a synthetic/medicinal chemist for anticancer drug discovery research at a pharmaceutical company.

**5. How has your agency been influenced by the partnership with the URRT?** I think, at least for the lab division at UDAF, we have become more aware of food safety in general and with the different aspects that are a part of the effort to deal with and contain outbreaks and issues with foodborne illness and food contamination. We've also learned a lot through the URRT partnership.

**6. What is your favorite quote or personal mantra?** One of my favorite quotes is from Niels Bohr, a famous physicist who made important contributions to understanding atomic structure: "An expert is a person who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field."

## Outbreak Story

Ongoing Salmonella Ohio Cases Lead Investigators to One Establishment  
by Dede Vilven, Michelle Vowles, Lili Benavidez, and Linda Bogdanow



Erik Nebeker, LEHS at SLCoHD collecting an environmental sample from the dump sink at the restaurant.

In September 2019, Salt Lake County Health Department (SLCoHD) detected a cluster of two Salmonella cases reporting eating at the same non-chain restaurant. Those Salmonella cases later matched additional cases by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and were identified as the rare Salmonella serotype Ohio. The small cluster quickly grew in number. A focused food history questionnaire was used for all the matching Salmonella Ohio cases.

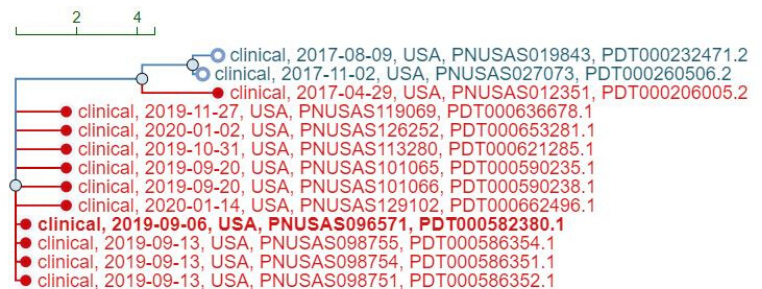
Reviewing data from the beginning of 2015 to the end of 2019 (five years), Salmonella serotype Ohio accounted for 4.6% of all Salmonella cases (26/565) in Utah. During 2019, laboratories nationwide started testing pathogens using WGS, replacing pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE). Utah has been utilizing the National Center for Biotechnology (NCBI) Pathogen Detection Portal to help identify information on Salmonella case

investigations. The NCBI Pathogen Detection project is a centralized system that integrates sequence data for bacterial pathogens obtained from food, the environment, and human patients. Agencies like the Utah Public Health Laboratory (UPHL) sequence the samples and submit the data to NCBI, which analyzes the sequences against others in its database to identify closely related sequences.

With additional laboratory and epidemiological data directing the investigation, the outbreak criteria were established and, a larger effort was launched with food protection environmental health officers and managerial staff at the restaurant. Several inspections and meetings over the course of five months occurred with the restaurant owner and employees.

In total, 12 Salmonella Ohio cases were part of the same phylogenetic tree, nine 2019 cases and three 2017 cases. 11/12 including all three of the 2017 cases lived in Salt Lake County. All 2019 cases reported eating at the restaurant, including one case who lived in a different county in Utah. One case from 2017 reported eating at the same restaurant.

Stool testing was completed by 10 food handlers in the restaurant. One food handler tested positive for Salmonella Ohio. This food handler was treated with antibiotics and



This is the phylogenetic tree taken from NCBI, all the cases in the outbreak. The ones highlighted red reported eating at the restaurant.

## Outbreak Story Continued

Ongoing Salmonella Ohio Cases Lead Investigators to One Establishment  
by Dede Vilven, Michelle Vowles, Lili Benavidez, and Linda Bogdanow

retested to confirm two negative stool results. Even though a food handler was discovered with a Salmonella infection it is not possible to declare this person as the primary source of infection. They could also be a victim of the outbreak due to consuming food at the establishment.



After vigorous cleaning by the establishment, 15 environmental samples were collected in January of 2020. All 15 of the environmental samples came back from UPHL as negative for Salmonella. There have been no new cases of Salmonella Ohio since January of 2020. Using NCBI helped us understand more about our outbreak and potentially how long the bacteria had been in the environment at the restaurant. This investigation took a lot of hard work and diligence by all the entities involved, and could not have been successful without the group effort. A big thank you to everyone that helped!

## Salmonella Fast Facts

**Incubation Period:** 1-3 days

**Signs and Symptoms:** Diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps, vomiting. *S. Typhi* and *S. Paratyphi* produce typhoid with insidious onset characterized by fever, headache, constipation, malaise, chills, and myalgia; diarrhea is uncommon, and vomiting is not usually severe.

**Duration of Illness:** 4-7 days

**Associated Foods:** Contaminated eggs, poultry, unpasteurized milk or juice, cheese, contaminated raw fruits and vegetables ( alfalfa sprouts, melons). *S. Typhi* epidemics are often related to fecal contamination of water supplies or street vended foods.

**Laboratory Testing:** Routine stool cultures.

**Treatment:** Supportive care. Other than for *S. Typhi* and *S. Paratyphi*, antibiotics are not indicated unless there is extra-intestinal spread, or the risk of extra-intestinal spread, of the infection . Consider ampicilin, gentamicin, TMP-SMX, or quinolones if indicated. A vaccine exists for *S. Typhi*.

## Report a Foodborne Illness



Ever wondered if something you ate got you sick? Go to [igotsick.health.utah.gov](https://igotsick.health.utah.gov) to answer a few questions about your symptoms, places you've visited, and what you ate. What made you sick was most likely not the last thing you ate.

# Save the Date



## Monthly RRT Teleconference

First Thursday of each month from 12:00pm-1:00pm  
The Monthly RRT Teleconferences are on a National level. If you are available please add this teleconference to your calendar. It helps to know what other states are doing in their RRT programs. The number for the call in meetings is 646-828-7666 or 669-254-5252; Meeting ID: 1614242877



## March 26 Steering Committee Meeting

We will be discussing the training's we have coming up in the next couple of months, COVID-19 response, recent food outbreaks, progress on our website, and the recent earthquake. Due to COVID-19, this meeting will be from 1:00-2:00PM via Hangouts Meet. The Call in number is 1-231-844-9703 PIN: 741 294#



## April 7-8 ER 220 Traceback Training

Due to COVID-19 this training has been postponed.



## May 13 Tabletop Exercise\*

You will not want to miss this Tabletop Exercise! This exercise is NOT limited to a number participants! It will be a very informative exercise and well worth your time. More information will be coming out as it gets closer.

\*If you are interested in the Tabletop Exercise contact Talisha Bacon to sign up.

## FDA COVID-19 Food Safety FAQ Webpage\*\*

FDA has created a food safety-specific FAQ page (separate from the main FAQ page with Food Products' section).

- Q: Is the US food supply safe?
- Q: Will there be food shortages?
- Q: Where should the food industry go for guidance about business operations?
- Q: A worker in my food processing facility/farm has tested positive for COVID-19. What steps do I need to take to ensure that the foods I produce are safe?
- Q: Do I need to recall food products produced in the facility during the time that the worker was potentially shedding virus while working?
- Q: If a worker in my food processing facility/farm has tested positive for COVID-19, Should I close the facility? If so, for how long?
- Q: How do I handle self-service food buffets such as salad bars in a retail setting related to COVID-19?
- Q: What steps do I need to take to clean the facility/equipment to prevent the spread of COVID-19?
- Q: Do I need to ask other workers who may have been exposed to a worker who tested positive for COVID-19 to self-quarantine for 14 days?
- Q: What measures are FDA (and CDC, state partners, etc.) taking to ensure that we remain able to address foodborne illness outbreaks during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Here is the weblink for more information <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

## Subscribe

If you would like to receive the URRT Newsletter send an email to Talisha Bacon at [tbacon@utah.gov](mailto:tbacon@utah.gov).

\*\* This update came from our National RRT weekly updates.