



*Timely, incisive and creative ideas for the agriculture entrepreneur.*

## Sensible Talk About Food Safety

### Consumers' perception of food safety.

Tongue twisting names like *E.coli*, *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, and *Campylobacter* have become household words. Reports of tainted hamburger or imported raspberries contaminated with *Cyclospora* routinely grab the headlines and consumers' attention.

#### **Is foodborne illness a new phenomenon, or is science just better able to detect previously unidentified foodborne illnesses?**

New foodborne pathogens are being identified. Improved detection capabilities can pinpoint lower concentrations of known pathogens. Our aging population is more sensitive to food safety problems. As well, there is a new threat from foods that were once thought to be safe. A recent case found *E.coli* contamination right in the heart of lettuce heads.

#### **Food safety is a global issue.**

Reports of BSE or "mad cow" disease and other food safety scares in Europe and around the world seem to have a permanent slot on the evening news.

Worldwide food safety has emerged as a significant global issue with international trade and public health implications. Global food trade is increasing due to improved transportation networks and growing populations requiring greater quantities of nutritious and safe foods. Although there is no evidence that

imported food poses higher food safety risks than domestically produced food, globalization of the food supply means that new food safety risks can be introduced to more countries and spread across greater geographic areas.

#### **What consumers believe they would do is different than what they actually do.**

It wasn't long ago that we knew almost nothing about food safety. Consumer awareness and knowledge of safe food handling practices have increased. Most consumers report they use safe handling practices such as keeping hands and surfaces clean and taking steps to prevent cross-contamination when preparing food. However, when observed consumers do not always follow these practices.

Many consumers fail to follow safe food handling practices such as properly defrosting meat and the "when in doubt, throw it out" rule. Consumers believe that foodborne illnesses most likely stem from food handling procedures at food processing plants and restaurants rather than in their own homes. This belief may lead to a false sense of security.

#### **Boosting consumer confidence.**

The Capital Health Authority increased food safety expectations for food processors in the Edmonton area. At a Christmas gift show I attended, processors had to provide food establishment permits

proving their products were processed in an approved kitchen. One booth displayed a large sign indicating their salsas, sauces and salad dressings were processed in a federally inspected plant. I also overheard booth staff informing purchasers about the safe use and storage of products after they were opened. This increased awareness and attention to food safety is a safeguard for both processors and the general public.

Canadians expect safe food and demand to be protected from food safety risks. While new technologies for food safety exist, they are only one link in the safe food supply chain. From farmer to consumer, everyone must be responsible for food safety. Are you doing your part?

Janice McGregor

# In My Humble Opinion.....

## A food poisoning experience.

I'm cold and clammy. My stomach is in knots. My mouth is starting to water... "Please, someone put me out of my misery!" I wish as I lie in a crumpled heap on the bathroom linoleum. It might be the flu. Or is it from something I ate? Flu symptoms, including stomach pain, diarrhea, nausea, chills, fever and headache are similar to "food poisoning" or foodborne illness. Foodborne illness is a challenge to identify since symptoms can occur anywhere from 30 minutes to two weeks after eating. Usually they show up in the first 4 to 48 hours. (Source: [www.canfightbac.org](http://www.canfightbac.org))

This is where my sorry tale begins...

I remember all too clearly my initial indoctrination to "the bug" almost 20 years ago after a family wedding reception. I think the culprit was the improperly cooled and heated stuffed turkey. I know I wasn't the only person worshipping the porcelain god 24 hours later! So...as the saying goes, "Once bitten, twice shy". I'm pretty careful now where and what I eat. I regularly check restaurant washrooms for cleanliness and keep my eyes peeled for good food handling practices at buffets. I am also very conscious how I handle and prepare food for my pre-schoolers at home.

In this issue of *Alberta Agri-preneur*, we decided to take a close look at the important food safety issues you should be aware of. Everyone can make a contribution to controlling foodborne bacteria and help reduce the risk of bacterial illness. It is a shared responsibility between producers, governments, processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and consumers who prepare food for their families at home.

I recovered from my bout of food poisoning but the young and elderly are very susceptible to foodborne illness. Some will even die. It is a sobering thought.

Food safety... it's everyone's responsibility.

Kathy Lowther



### Food Safety Myth

Research shows that consumers have limited knowledge about the sources and nature of food-related illness and often fail to routinely follow safe food handling practices. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's 1998 National Safe Food Handling Study revealed the following:

#### Consumer Belief:

There is considerable confusion over safe meat defrosting practices. For example, 29 per cent of Canadians believe it is safe to defrost a turkey at room temperature.

#### Fact:

The safest method for defrosting meat, poultry and seafood is in the refrigerator. Defrosting under cold running water or in the microwave are also considered safe. Defrosting at room temperature is unsafe.

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**Alberta**  
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# Ensure The Safety Of Your Food Products...

## The Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is a proactive program that can be implemented at all levels of the food supply.

HACCP (pronounced “ha-sip”) is internationally recognized as an effective approach to food safety. Regulatory agencies in the United States have made it mandatory for some high-risk industries like red meat processing to have a HACCP system in place.

Where HACCP is still voluntary, many companies are choosing to develop and implement a HACCP program to show due diligence in product manufacturing, meet customer requests and gain access to markets with HACCP requirements. Consequences of not producing safe, high quality food products can include serious foodborne illnesses, legal action, and loss of consumer confidence from negative publicity.

### Farm to fork process

In Canada, HACCP based programs have been developed and are in various stages of implementation at all levels of the food supply. This recognizes food safety as a shared responsibility. It begins with good controls and practices during farm production and continues through to processing, distribution, retailing and consumer purchase.

### What does HACCP involve and what food safety hazards are addressed?

A HACCP based food safety system is proactive and emphasizes prevention. It involves anticipating any biological, chemical and physical hazards that may be present in the ingredients or during the manufacture of the food and ensuring these are controlled to prevent adverse human health consequences. These hazards can be naturally present in the food, contributed by the environment or generated by mistakes in the manufacturing process.

### Identify hazards

As evidenced by large foodborne illness outbreaks in recent years like *E.coli* O157:H7 in undercooked hamburger, emphasis is often placed on identifying the biological hazards that may be present. These types of hazards have the potential to cause illness or even death. On the other hand, a physical hazard such as a chipped tooth for only one consumer but is still an important hazard that needs to be addressed.

Once the potential hazards are known, appropriate control measures are applied to prevent, eliminate or reduce the hazard(s). By monitoring the process and establishing corrective actions to ensure critical limits are met, we gain confidence in the safety of the foods.

### Should I set up a HACCP program?

Developing, implementing and maintaining a HACCP program is often perceived as a difficult task. While some processors realize there are definite benefits to them as a company and voluntarily choose to develop a HACCP system, others struggle with the decision or are not prepared to make the commitment. An effective HACCP program requires staff cooperation, management commitment and sufficient resources.

### A look to the future.

HACCP is not the “magic bullet”. Foodborne illnesses can still occur due to improper hazard assessment and evolution of the hazards. Canada does not currently require all food processors to have a HACCP system in place. However, mandatory HACCP for all federally registered meat facilities has been proposed and other industry sectors may soon follow.

Alison Look

## Is Food Safety Part Of Your Image?

Farm direct marketers understand the importance of adhering to food safety standards. In a recent Ipsos-Reid study, consumers indicated their confidence in the safety of food products sold at farmers' markets. They rated farm direct marketers as #1 for offering safe food. Consumer perception of safe, wholesome food is an image that is vital to farm direct marketers.

The key to developing a strong image or brand, according to Ted Kouri, of Incite Solutions is to be transparent. Good brands are consistent and produce the same message and impact on your customer.

What are you doing to send a transparent “food safety” message? How are you following through? Here are two examples:

- The Best Little Pork Shoppe and McCulley’s Hill Farm in Ontario offer styrofoam coolers for their customers to transport frozen meat home. The Pork Shoppe sells frozen bottles of spring water to use as freezer packs in the coolers.
- Millang Pasture Poultry in Alberta offers a free meat thermometer with every turkey purchase.

Kerry Engel

# Food Safety Begins On The Farm

## On-farm food safety programs reassure consumers.

Although today's food supply is safer than ever, consumers are looking for proof that their food is being produced in a safe manner.

The processing industry has played the leading role in ensuring that food is produced under safe conditions. However, some food safety hazards can only be controlled at the farm level.

There are numerous biological, chemical and physical hazards that can pass from the farm into the food supply system. Some of these hazards are obvious such as when the tip of a needle breaks off during vaccination and stays in the muscle of the cow. Some, like insecticide residue on broccoli or bacteria on an eggshell, are invisible.

### Food safety programs are a priority.

Canada began developing initiatives for on-farm food safety in 1996. Commodity associations are in varying stages of developing new codes of practice and programs for on-farm food safety (OFFS). These national standards programs are voluntary and are being managed by producer groups.

### On Farm Food Safety (OFFS)

OFFS programs are based on the recognized principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and are designed to reduce the risk of food contamination. They help create a proper operational environment for food safety through the implementation of Good Production Practices (GPP). These programs can be applied to any type of agricultural operation. The keys are:

- thorough knowledge of the hazards and risks on the farm
- a good understanding of the GPP recommended for the commodity and type of farming operation
- an effective written plan for the individual farm.

### Documentation is an essential component of an OFFS program.

Each program requires that producers have effective, written standard operating procedures based on good production practices. Records of the daily activities are used to monitor and verify procedures at the farm level.

A trained validator reviews the standard operating procedures and records. Problems are discussed with the producer with suggestions for corrective actions. The validator makes a recommendation to the delivery agency about whether the producer should be certified. Producers have the opportunity to correct any problems identified during validation.

It will cost a producer to implement an OFFS program but there are direct benefits. They include: increased productivity, improved animal health, fewer losses and retained markets.

According to one horticultural marketer, it's only a matter of time before buyers demand proof of a food safety program as a condition of purchase.

### Where do you begin?

Implementing a food safety program on the farm is a challenge but it's important that each link in the food chain does its part to ensure the safety and quality of agricultural products. To set up a food safety system for your farm, consult the materials prepared by the appropriate national commodity organization. This information is generally available through the provincial association.

### Bison

The Canadian Bison Association's OFFS program is an important tool in ensuring that bison meat is as safe as possible. The Bison GPP Manual and the Producer On-Farm Assessment form provide a producer framework.

The Alberta bison industry will begin implementing the program this spring. For more information contact John Grinde, Alberta Bison Association, (403) 843-6779.



### Cattle



Since 1994, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association has been working to develop a quality assurance program for beef producers. The *Quality Starts Here* ✓ Program outlines the responsibilities of producers to ensure the quality and safety of Canadian beef.

The OFFS program contains detailed information manuals including GPP for Feedlot Producers and GPP for Cow-Calf Producers, Recommended Operating Procedures for Feedlot Animal Health, and Production Practices for Controlling Feed Quality. These manuals also give examples of the forms that will help producers with the necessary documentation.

For more information about the *Quality Starts Here* ✓ Program, contact Gary Sargent, Alberta Cattle Commission, (403) 275-4400.

### Crops

The Canada Grains Council is developing food safety programs for the farm and post farm handling of grains, oilseeds, pulses and special crops. The Council hopes to conduct a pilot project during the 2002/2003 crop year. For more information contact Erin Holowach, Alberta Grain Commission, (780) 422-0878.



### Dairy

Dairy producers are encouraged to get involved with the *Canadian Quality Milk Program*. Most producers will have little difficulty implementing this new program since they are already involved with on-farm quality assurance.



The Dairy Farmers of Canada is developing a Best Management Practices/HACCP for Milk and Meat Quality Assurance. For more information contact Mike Southwood, Alberta Milk Producers, (780) 453-5942.

**Elk**

The Canadian Cervid Council is in the early stages of developing an on-farm food safety program. Contact Don Bamber, Alberta Elk Association, (780) 785-3558.

**Horticulture**

The Canadian Horticultural Council developed the *OFFS Guidelines for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables*. The guidelines cover production, harvest, cooling, storage, packing, transportation and handling prior to wholesale. Contact Betty Vladicka, AAFRD, (780) 427-0840.



**Poultry** The poultry industry is developing programs for each of its major commodities:

**Chicken**

The Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC) introduced their *Safe, Safer, Safest program* in 1998. In addition to the GPP manual, the program focuses on detailed surveillance methods and corrective actions. The CFC believes that the most important element of the program is accurate record keeping through the entire production cycle. For information contact Lloyd Johnston, Alberta Chicken Producers, (780) 488-2125.

**Hatching Egg**

*The Canadian Hatching Egg Quality Program* (CHEQ) is a major element in the Canadian poultry industry's "gate to plate" approach to food safety. It links into the food safety initiatives developed by feed mills, hatcheries, chicken producers and poultry processors. For more information contact Bob Smook, Alberta Hatching Egg Producers, (780) 434-8414.

**Table Eggs**

The *Start Clean-Stay Clean program* was developed by the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency. The "gate to plate" approach is fully integrated in this industry. Agency officers inspect farms and advise on the program's guidelines. Layer barns are tested to detect the presence of certain bacteria. Egg grading stations are inspected regularly. Graders and

processors are also implementing HACCP programs to maximize food safety. For more information about the *Start Clean-Stay Clean program* contact Susan Gal, Alberta Egg Producers, (403) 250-1197.

**Turkey**

The Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency is revising their *Raising Turkeys...Producing Food* manual. The program includes a comprehensive list of GPP and an ante-mortem reporting system. The Agency has also developed forms to assist producers with their record keeping. For information contact Greg Smith, Alberta Turkey Producers, (780) 465-5755.

**Sheep**

The Canadian Sheep Federation is developing an OFFS program for their industry. A pilot project will be conducted this summer. Contact Maureen Duffy, Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission, (403) 948-8533.

**Swine**

Canada's pork industry is an innovator in food safety through the design and implementation of the *Canadian Quality Assurance (CQA) program* by the Canadian Pork Council. The program is designed to raise the awareness of producers about the risks of marketing pigs with drug residues, bacterial contamination or physical hazards such as broken needles. It provides an annual review of records and performance by program-trained validators.



In Alberta, the CQA program is delivered by Alberta Quality Pork, a not-for-profit company representing a partnership between Alberta Pork, the processing sector and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. More than 85% of Alberta production has been validated with over 530 producers on the program. For more information contact Sarah Turner, Alberta Quality Pork, 780-477-6729.

Food safety is everyone's responsibility!

Betty Vladicka

**"Don't Be A Gambler"**

(tune of "The Gambler", Kenny Rogers)

On a warm summer's evening  
Just a while before dinner  
I opened up the fridge to get some  
Fully thawed ground beef  
Then I shaped some patties  
And I put 'em on the skillet  
Washed my hands for 20 seconds  
Any less is just too brief

I fired up the burner  
And I fried up the burgers  
Cooked 'em till the pink was gone  
And the juices ran quite clear  
I made sure the centers  
Had made it to 160  
Then I served 'em to my family  
Without feelin' any fear

It's true that home food safety  
Is serious business  
Keeping foodborne pathogens  
From striking day or night  
And it may seem hard  
To keep taking those precautions  
But if you're preparing food, folks,  
You gotta learn to do it right

You gotta know when to heat 'em  
Know when to eat 'em  
Know when to wash your hands  
And decontaminate  
There's no need to gamble  
When you're eatin' at the table  
Or you'll be sick in the bathroom  
When the evening's late

**Carl K. Winter, Ph.D.**  
**Extension Food Toxicologist**  
**Director, Food Safe Program**  
**University of California Davis**

Check out this and other musical tributes to food safety at the following site:  
<http://foodsafe.ucdavis.edu/music.html>

# The French Connection

## Product labels depict regional distinctiveness.

Today's consumer is concerned about the safety of their food. They enjoy regional cuisine. They want to support local farmers. A market focused label program in French is helping producers to capitalize on these trends... to help differentiate French food.

Appellation D'Origine Controlee (AOC) is an initiative by the French government to preserve French food quality, regional distinctiveness and agriculture production in climatically disadvantaged areas. To obtain a product label producers show production system uniqueness, conform to quality guarantee and undergo taste tests demonstrating product differentiation from "industrial scale labeled product".

Producers who acquire an AOC label pay for certification. If a producer is "out of conformity" they are banned for life from being able to have product labeled under the program.

### Is it working?

Of the country's poultry market, 30% comes from AOC labeled "Free Range Chickens".

Of the cheese market, 20% is AOC labeled, regionally distinct product that sells at a 10—30% price premium to industrial scale cheese.

### Label initiative reaps rewards.

During the BSE crisis, sales of "Normande" labeled beef actually went up while the industrial market crashed 50%. The AOC labeling initiative has interested young people in farming again according to the French Ag. Ministry. The Ag. Ministry estimates that the majority of the labeled products are consumed within 65 miles of where they are produced.

### Label criteria

Using "Normande" AOC beef as an example, the following criteria must be met before an AOC label is awarded.

- minimum 6 months/year on pasture
- no GMO feed or feed products
- no growth hormones
- 30 month minimum slaughter age discourages grain feeding
- meat aged a minimum of 12 days
- slaughter occurred at one of only 6 approved plants

This is on top of the standard passport information which includes:

- animal identity
- county & country born
- ISO code (bar code)
- sex
- breed
- birthdate
- owner
- herd health status
- sire & dam breed
- dam identity

All of this information, plus the packaging date and slaughter plant identity are on the label of each meat cut sold.

The label system boosts consumer confidence because of its vigorous compliance. Products are also unique and must meet consumer demand. The result is a strong market presence of small, regionally diverse agricultural producers and processors in France.

Rod Carlyon

## Test Your Food Safety Knowledge

### True or False?

1. **Food safety and food spoilage are different.** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Foods that are unsafe to consume will smell and taste funny.** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Foods consumed with low bacterial counts will not cause foodborne illness.** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Foods can be consumed after the "best before" date and not cause foodborne illness.** \_\_\_\_\_
5. **Foods consumed with high bacterial counts will cause foodborne illness.** \_\_\_\_\_

### Answers:

1. **True.** The presence of disease causing organisms is responsible for causing foodborne illness and therefore, determines whether or not a food is safe to consume. Food spoilage is often caused by non-pathogenic organisms that have been allowed to grow and cause physical changes to the food. Food spoilage is related to the quality of the food and the loss of desired properties, not safety.
2. **False.** Often you can't tell if a food is safe to eat by its look, smell or taste. Pathogenic bacteria can be present and not change the physical properties of the food yet cause illness.
3. **False.** Some pathogenic bacteria may be present in very low numbers and still cause foodborne illness. It's estimated that ten *E.coli* O157:H7 cells have the potential to cause foodborne illness.
4. **True.** Best before dates are guarantees made by the manufacturer of the unopened product to that date if it's been handled properly (e.g. temperature of storage). Best before dates are established through shelf-life studies done in a controlled environment.

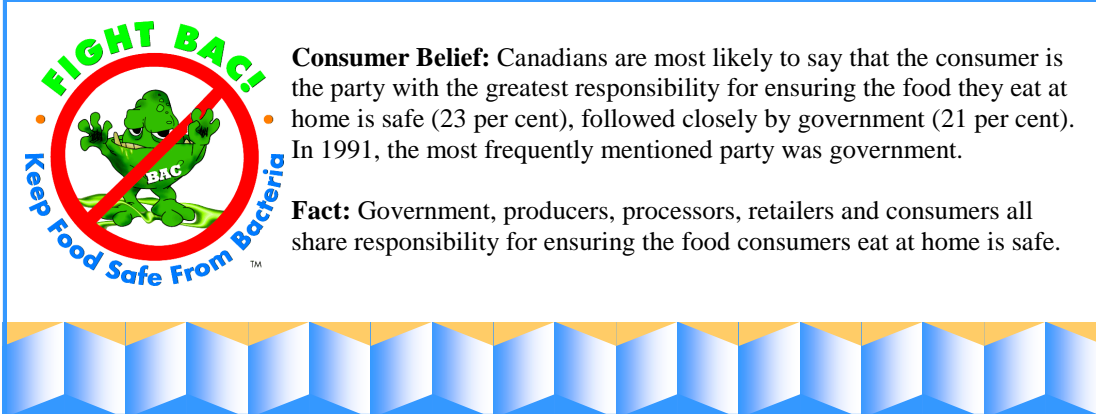
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## Test Your Food Safety Knowledge

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5. **False.** It depends on the food and bacteria present. Certain foods have high bacterial counts based upon the way they are made or stored but are safe to eat. For instance, fermented foods such as sauerkraut and yogurt use bacterial cultures to develop the desired texture and taste of the finished product. Modified atmosphere packaged sandwiches use elevated levels of carbon dioxide to promote the growth of lactic acid bacteria. Lactic acid bacteria produce anti-microbial substances that are inhibitory to certain pathogenic and spoilage organisms.

Alison Look



**Consumer Belief:** Canadians are most likely to say that the consumer is the party with the greatest responsibility for ensuring the food they eat at home is safe (23 per cent), followed closely by government (21 per cent). In 1991, the most frequently mentioned party was government.

**Fact:** Government, producers, processors, retailers and consumers all share responsibility for ensuring the food consumers eat at home is safe.

## An AFSC Commercial Story

### AFSC Commercial helps businesses on their way with unique financial services

#### What makes AFSC Commercial different from other financial institutions?

We take a collaborative approach, working with other lenders and investors because it adds value for our clients. AFSC Commercial negotiates financing involving millions of dollars in new investments either through direct financing or strategic alliances with other financial companies. This allows us to bring a wide range of financial products and services to the table without duplicating resources. We identify opportunities and build teams to capitalize on them by searching out the best financing for every client. In turn, lenders and investors see AFSC Commercial as a source of promising, high-quality clients. It's a relationship that works.

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Sometimes you need a little information before you know what kind of financial help your business requires. Through our consulting services, clients can access a wealth of knowledge and expertise for anything from how to form an advisory panel to strategic and financial planning and business risk analysis. Since everyone's needs are unique, we offer advice on designing a specific financing package that's right for your business.

#### What if I need more than a conventional loan?

AFSC Commercial has a variety of financing options to meet your business needs: conventional debt financing, mortgages, leasing, equipment financing, operating loans, capital sourcing (helping you find other financial partners) or introduction to equity sources.

#### As an agribusiness client, what impact will the AFSC/Alberta Opportunity Company (AOC) merger have on me?

The merger between AFSC and AOC means that AFSC can serve more Albertans with a broader range of financial products since AOC's financial products and services will be added to AFSC's. This allows us to offer a one window approach to made in Alberta financial solutions for more than 25,000 small businesses, agribusiness owners and farm clients.

To contact AFSC Commercial, call Edmonton (780) 415-1216, Calgary (403) 297-6281, Camrose (780) 679-1311, or Lethbridge (403) 381-5240, or visit our websites at [www.agric.gov.ab.ca/afsccommercial](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/afsccommercial) and [www.aoc.gov.ab.ca](http://www.aoc.gov.ab.ca).

*Creative...Visionary...Positive...Networked...Innovative...Market Focused...Risk Taker...*

# Food Safety And Agri-tourism: It's All About Risk Management

**Food is what travelers remember with fondness or regret.** As someone who serves the traveling consumer, you want to provide them with the best quality and safest food you can – if you want them to come back that is!

“You’ve just got to stop at this market garden. They have the best saskatoon pie!” Wouldn’t you just love it if people talked about your operation that way? Word of mouth is still the best marketing tool you have as an agri-tourism operator. The trick to remember is that bad news travels even faster than good news by word of mouth.

## Use proper processing techniques.

History shows that bad food experiences happen at agri-tourism operations. Take cider milling, for example. There have been a number of outbreaks of foodborne illness from *E.coli* due to improper cider processing. In all instances the tragedies could have been avoided. In the words of Patrick O’Connor, Michigan Apple Committee, “If we want to be in it for the long term we’ve got to respect the danger. This is a real problem, not just something that’s happened to someone else.”

For information on safe pasteurization of fruit juice and cider consult the following web addresses:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/processed/codee.shtml>  
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/foodfacts/juicee/shtml>

When people visit an agri-tourism operation they are anticipating home-style food that is made from tasty local products. They assume the food is prepared and served in safe manner. Your job is actually two-fold. Not only should you educate yourself about food safety and strive to exceed the recommendations, but you can also help to educate the consumer about safe food handling.

Many agri-tourism operators offer food to be consumed on site as well as to purchase and take home. If your customers are transporting food on hot summer days, offer them tips to preserve both the safety and quality of the product.


## Farm petting zoos

Animals can carry disease. Not washing your hands after being in contact with them can result in illness. In fact, in 1999, up to 159 visitors may have been affected by *E.coli* after visiting a petting zoo operation in Ontario. A Worcester, Pennsylvania operation was identified as the source of infection for 61 children under the age of 10. These kinds of incidents can be detrimental to an operation. For a factsheet on how to avoid gastrointestinal outbreaks at petting zoos and on farms contact [sharon.stollery@gov.ab.ca](mailto:sharon.stollery@gov.ab.ca)

## What can you do?

- According to Desmond Jolly, Director of the Small Farm Center at the University of California Davis, “We need to recognize that microbial contamination is a constant risk that threatens our ability to market our (products).”
- Learn all you can about safe food handling and protecting your customers. It’s your responsibility.
- Train your staff.
- Provide food safety information to your customers – verbally, in writing and through appropriate signage.
- Have hand washing stations available and encourage customers to use them, especially after touching animals or using the washroom.

Sharon Stollery



**Consumer Belief:** 75 per cent of Canadians believe the most important thing they can do to keep food safe is wash their hands.

**Fact:** Although thorough hand washing before preparing food is very important, other practices, including refrigerating food promptly, cooking food to proper internal temperatures and keeping different foods separate from each other to avoid cross-contamination, are equally important.

**Consumer Action:** Although most consumers surveyed said they refrigerated leftovers within two hours of cooking, eight per cent said they wait over 24 hours to refrigerate leftovers.

**Fact:** Leftovers should be refrigerated as soon as possible, within two hours of cooking.

# The Barn Loft Inn Creates A Quality Experience

Ramona and Wayne Ergezinger and their three sons offer a unique agri-tourism experience. The Barn Loft Inn, located on their 320 acre farm south of Vegreville, offers a bed and breakfast country retreat for families and smaller groups. The upper level loft has 4 spacious self-contained rooms. Accommodation includes a full home-cooked breakfast customized to suit guests' tastes. The lower level hall is suitable for meetings, workshops, anniversaries and family gatherings for up to 100 people.

The Barn Loft Inn is part of the *Canada Select program*. A 3½ star rating for 2002 assures guests of a high quality facility.

Prior to opening the Barn Loft Inn in September 2001, the Ergezingers raised wild boar. They still raise a few wild boar, selling them as feeders to a larger operation for finishing. They provide provincially inspected boar meat to their guests on request.

Ramona contacted the public health inspector when planning her business. His site evaluation was very helpful. Water testing for safety was a crucial recommendation.

Ramona recognizes that food safety is very important in her agri-tourism business. Serving well prepared, safe food to her family and guests is a priority. As she explains, "the protection and safety of her guests adds to their positive experience on her farm."

Ramona is certified in both the basic and advanced Food Safe courses offered by her regional health authority and taught by the public health inspector. She took the courses because she wanted to learn as much as she could about food safety so she could provide the best possible service to her guest.

Here are a few of Ramona's good practices for food handlers:

- Remember the importance of washing your hands. Before handling foods wash your hands in warm soapy water for 30 seconds. Wash hands often if handling different kinds of foods.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Avoid the danger zone for perishable foods. The danger zone is 4°C to 60° C (or 40° F to 140°F). A fridge magnet reminds Ramona that "Bacteria Life Begins at 40°F." Refrigerate unused portions of food as soon as possible or within 2 hours after serving. After 2 hours the unused foods should be discarded.
- Prevent cross contamination of foods. Ramona has separate cutting boards for bread products, raw meats and fruits and vegetables.
- Have a separate set of cutlery and dishes for guests. When serving her guests Ramona handles the dishes carefully making sure she doesn't touch the surfaces that will come in direct contact with her guests' mouths.
- Use very hot water in the dishwasher and include heat sanitizing as part of the washing cycle.

Ramona strongly advises people setting up a similar business to contact the public health inspector early in the planning stages. They provide invaluable information and advice.

The Ergezinger family welcomes their visitors to "come out to the country" and experience nature at its best.

To learn more contact:  
Ramona and Wayne Ergezinger and Sons  
Box 1731  
Vegreville, AB T9C 1S8

Marian Williams

**BARN LOFT INN**

"Come out to the Country"

Experience Nature At Its Best

"The Ergezingers"  
Wayne, Ramona & Sons  
Phone/Fax: (780) 632-3345  
Email: wrerg@telusplanet.net  
Vegreville, Alberta Canada

# Research Can Make The Difference

## Agripreneurs who are starting a new venture or expanding their existing business can use research tools and statistics to clarify target market characteristics and identify trends.

The Economics & Competitiveness Division of Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development focuses on market and consumer analysis. Research Officer Rosalie Cunningham says, “we look at both large commodity and emerging markets to find opportunities for Alberta producers. Then we take the statistics one step further by mixing them with market trends, industry analysis, and consumer facts such as demographics, attitudes, lifestyle and preferences. This can help determine the market potential, recommend strategies, or highlight an opportunity.”

Rosalie’s current research projects include examining consumer trends and niche opportunities for organics. Over the next year, Rosalie will research farm direct marketing trends and opportunities in Alberta.

Although food safety has not been a direct focus of recent research, much of the data collected in other projects is related. Food safety is a high concern for the Canadian consumer; it ranked third highest, topped only by bacterial contamination and pollution. By examining the consumer’s perception of which foods are safer, you can find opportunities for new products and potential marketing strategies.

If you are looking for consumer research data on agriculture and food, check the Alberta Agriculture website at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca>. From here, you can access a variety of sources including *Expresso*, a quarterly newsletter

published by the Economics and Competitiveness Division. Use the search feature on the site, send a question to Duke, or contact the unit directly at (780) 422-7101 for further information.

Rosalie adds, “some data is very expensive. There are a couple of ways to find excellent free information. I recommend trying <http://www.gdsourcing.com/home.htm> for free statistics. It is an easy-to-use Canadian site that lists available statistics by topic and source. If you go to agri-food in the a-z subject listing, it has all the federal and provincial departments offering statistics on food. Follow the link to the agency. This site makes it easy to find the statistics from Agriculture Canada and Statistics Canada.

With search engines, a trick for finding statistics on-line is to use ‘statistics’, ‘survey’ or ‘study’ in the search terms. ‘Consumer survey’ with your topic will usually turn up polls that have been done on that topic. Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) works well and has a nice feature where you can search only one particular site.

Research done by universities and government, especially agricultural economics papers, provides some very valuable information. The library at the University of Minnesota (<http://agecon.lib.umn.edu>) collects journal articles, conference proceedings and university research papers. While the majority of the information is American, there is some Canadian work. The papers include statistics and analysis, as well as other sources of information. Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (<http://www.agr.gc.ca>) and the USDA (<http://www.usda.gov/>) also have some good reports on agri-food industries if you are willing to search them out.

Other sources include trade magazines and newsletters. They are devoted to a particular industry, so the focus is on what matters to that industry. Generally, trade

magazines do a year in review which can be an excellent source of current statistics, trends and projected growth rates. In addition, check newspapers and magazines for current information. For the best source of current data, interview real people – industry experts, producers, and consumers.

Research may seem like a burden, but the information and insight you gain may mean the difference between a mediocre venture and one that is focused and meets your client needs.

Linda Hawk  
Rosalie Cunningham

### Farm Direct Marketing Profit\$

Three new farm direct marketing publications are now available. The “Profits” series is a business performance tool that helps managers plan for profit. The information was generated by groups of producers/marketers who arrived at a consensus of opinion concerning the investment, production, marketing requirements, costs and revenues associated with developing viable direct marketing enterprises.

1. Direct Marketing Poultry Profit\$
2. Direct Marketing of Beef Products Profit\$
3. Direct Marketing of Dairy Products Profit\$

For a copy contact Kerry Engel at (780) 349-4466.

# Networking

## The Food Safety Info Line

1-800-892-8333 (Alberta toll free)

The Food Safety Info Line provides consumers with current, credible science based information through its toll free service. It is dedicated to increasing consumer confidence in the safety of Canada's food supply and decreasing the incidence of foodborne illness in Canada. Info Line professionals answer consumer questions on food preparation, storage, handling, quality assurance, food safety, agricultural practices and regulations. The *How to Store Food Safely* booklet is available free of charge by calling the Info Line.

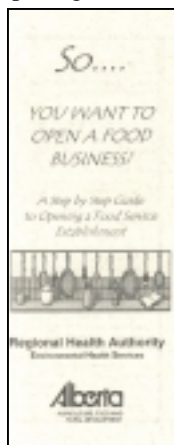
## FoodSafe

This two day food sanitation and hygiene program is offered by regional health authorities across Alberta. The FoodSafe course is recommended for all food handlers whether they are involved in food manufacturing or service. It reviews all aspects of safe food handling from personal hygiene to food storage and pest control. The material is presented in layman's terms and is easily applied to any food handling situation. The program is well worth its registration fee. Call your regional health authority's environmental health services for information and their workshop schedule. Some regional health authorities may offer a 1/2 day short course at no charge.

## So.... You Want To Open A Food Business?

This step by step guide to opening a food service establishment is available from the Alberta Agri-preneur office.

E-mail  
darleen.lynes@gov.ab.ca  
for your free copy.



**FightBAC!**<sup>TM</sup> provides consumers, health professionals, educators and the media the latest news about preventing foodborne illness. Techniques which minimize the number of bacteria on food must be employed at all levels of processing from the farm to the grocery store. *FightBac!*<sup>TM</sup> suggests the risk of foodborne illness can be reduced by following four simple steps:

**CLEAN**—wash hands and surfaces often and thoroughly  
**SEPARATE**—don't cross contaminate

**COOK**—cook foods thoroughly to recommended internal temperatures

**CHILL**—refrigerate at 4°C (40°F), or freeze at -18°C (0°F) promptly.



## Resources & Websites

### Definition of Farm Direct Marketing:

FDM is relationship marketing between producers/processors and consumers that consistently offers quality agri-food products through a variety of marketing channels. FDM allows the producer to assume the accountability and rewards of delivering a product directly to the consumer.

### Farm Direct Marketing Profit\$ (listed on page 10)

These fact sheets include projected profitability of direct market protein operations, expected processing and marketing costs and labor requirements as well as other key economic, production and marketing parameters.

### Farm Direct Marketing Protein Checklist

This resource is intended to assist farm direct marketers interested in direct marketing meat in Alberta. It is a checklist of common issues with links to comprehensive materials. For information contact the Alberta Agri-preneur office (780) 349-4466.

### Websites offering food safety information:

<http://www.canfightbac.org/english/indexe.shtml>  
<http://www.fightbac.org/main.cfm>  
[http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/org/food\\_safety\\_division.html](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/org/food_safety_division.html)  
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/index/fssae.shtml>  
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/>  
<http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/food/industry/foodsafetysecurity.htm>  
<http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/infores/foodsafe/safety.html>  
<http://www.foodsafetynetwork.ca/>  
<http://www.afpa.com/snq/>

Karen Goad



# Upcoming Events

## Food Marketing Institute (FMI)

May 5 – 7, 2002  
Chicago, IL  
Phone (202) 452-8444  
Fax (202) 429-4519  
Website: [www.fmi.org/events/may/](http://www.fmi.org/events/may/)

## NASFT Spring International Fancy Food and Confection Show

May 5 – 7, 2002  
Chicago, IL  
Phone (212) 482-6440, ext. 250  
Website: [www.fancyfoodshows.com](http://www.fancyfoodshows.com)

## CCGD 2002 National Conference

May 25 — 28, 2002  
Whistler, BC  
Contact: Michelle Scott, CCGD  
Phone (416) 922 6228  
Fax (416) 922-5909  
Website: [www.ccgd.ca](http://www.ccgd.ca)

## The Canadian Fine Food Show

May 26 – 27, 2002  
Mississauga, ON  
Contact: Vince Mancuso  
Phone (888) 726-9598 or (905) 761-9951  
Fax (905) 761-9952

## FoodTec '02

May 26 - 28, 2002  
Edmonton, AB  
Phone (613) 525-2833  
Fax (613) 525-4328  
Website: [www.cifst.ca/](http://www.cifst.ca/)

## Alberta Gift Show

August 18 – 21, 2002  
Edmonton, AB  
Phone (800) 633-8332 or (604) 412-2271  
Fax (604) 433-4807  
Website: [www.albertaagiftshow.com](http://www.albertaagiftshow.com)

## Northern Bounty V

October 4 – 6, 2002  
Guelph, ON  
Phone (877) 828-7463  
Fax (306) 387-6637  
Website: [www.cuisinecanada.ca](http://www.cuisinecanada.ca)

2003

## Explore Direct 2 Conference

January 20 – 22, 2003  
Location TBA, AB  
Email address: [kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca](mailto:kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca)

## North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association Conference

February 3 – 10, 2003  
Charlotte, NC  
Phone (888) 884-9270 or (413) 529-0386  
Fax (413) 529-2471  
Website: [www.nafdma.com](http://www.nafdma.com)

## Rural Tourism Conference

February 10 – 12, 2003  
Camrose, AB  
Email address: [sharon.stollery@gov.ab.ca](mailto:sharon.stollery@gov.ab.ca)

## Vancouver Gift Show/Uniquely BC

March 9 - 11, 2003  
Vancouver, BC  
Phone (800) 633-8332 or (604) 412-2271  
Fax (604) 433-4807  
Website: [www.vancouvergiftshow.com](http://www.vancouvergiftshow.com)

## SIAL

April 2- 4, 2003  
Montreal, PQ  
Phone (800) 363-3923  
Fax (514) 289-1034  
Email address: [info@sial-montreal.com](mailto:info@sial-montreal.com)

## International Association of Culinary Professionals Conference

April 9 – 12, 2003  
Montreal, PQ  
Phone (800) 928-4227 or (502) 581-9786  
Fax (502) 589- 3602  
Website [www.iacp.com](http://www.iacp.com)



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Chris & Arron work with value added processing of meats including sausage and deli meats, slaughter, cutting, sanitation, foods safety, formulation costing, labor costing and equipment technology.

## Economics & Competitiveness Division

- Rosalie Cunningham, Edmonton  
(780) 422-7101

 Dial 310-0000 first for toll-free access.

 To E-mail these specialists:  
[firstname.lastname@gov.ab.ca](mailto:firstname.lastname@gov.ab.ca)