

**FOOD RISK EVALUATION COMMITTEE TRIP REPORT**  
**23 MARCH 2000**  
**SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

**BACKGROUND**

The Food Risk Evaluation Committee (FREC) is established by, and provides service to, the Director, Department of Defense Veterinary Services Activity (DODVSA), and subsequently to the Offices of the Surgeons General. The FREC meets in an annual forum and, as determined necessary by the Chairman through electronic means to:

- a. Provide expert guidance to DODVSA on matters relating to the safety of foods.
- b. Review information sources on the public health risk of food, expertly consider new data, and recommend appropriate actions to protect the health of service personnel.

Membership consists of Army Veterinary Officers in key positions throughout DOD, Chief, Military Public Health, Office of the Air Force Surgeon General, Representative Army Medical Detachment Commanders, Senior Sanitarian, CHPPM and Director, Preventive Medicine, Navy Environmental Health Center. Navy concerns and issues are either represented by NEHC or by the Staff Army Veterinarian at NAVSUP, Mechanicsburg, PA.

I represented Commander Rendin at the annual meeting. The committee pursued a full and ambitious agenda and shared information of vital interest to all uniformed services. Participation in this committee is essential to Force Protection of Sailors and Marines. I recommend continued high priority attention to the work of this committee.

**COMMITTEE MEETING**

The FREC convened at 0800, 23 March 2000. Colonel Lafon C. Lively, Director of Food Safety and Public Health, U. S. Army Veterinary Command and Chairman of the FREC delivered opening remarks and welcomed the participants. Mr. Robert Kilburn, FREC Coordinator set the agenda and reviewed the documentation packages.

***Update on USAF Force Protection Battlelab Food and Water Antiterrorism Initiative.*** Major Scott W. Brooks, Director, Food Safety Programs, USAF School of Aerospace Medicine reviewed the progress of this initiative. The Air Force conducted a top to bottom process and procedure review of their food and water systems, particularly in Southwest Asia to determine terrorism vulnerability. They developed a Food and Water Protection Handbook to be published in the near future. The important findings and recommendations of this initiative follow:

- Food is most vulnerable to tampering and attack at the point of preparation. The use of indigenous food preparation personnel of unknown allegiance presents the largest risk. The initiative recommends that only U. S. personnel prepare food in high-risk areas (i.e. Southwest Asia). The FREC discussed the logistical and personnel availability concerns of this recommendation.
- Source security and distribution present high risk, as well. The initiative recommends the utilization of the Defense Supply System instead of local sources for all food procurement. Where contracts are utilized, security considerations should be written into the contracts. In distribution, warehouse control, background checks on drivers, and truck seals were discussed as key to food protection.
- Increased use of Rapid Diagnostic Detection tools for pathogens and chemicals.
- Improved collection, tracking and analysis of food and water borne outbreak data to determine commonality.

***Update on Irradiated Food Procurement.*** Major Brooks also provided updated information on the initiatives to procure and use irradiated foods in DOD. There is little forward progress toward irradiated foods. The Supply System created NSN numbers for their procurement. The predominant attitude is one of “wait and see” whether they are accepted by general consumers and whether they are commonly available from commercial grocers.

***Commercial Sanitary Standards.*** Chief Warrant Officers Killian and Worfel presented a summaries of the proposed MILSTD Sanitation *Requirements for Food Establishments* and the proposed MILHDBK *Guidelines for Auditing Food Establishments*. These documents were eliminated without consultation during the Paperwork Reduction initiatives of 1993/94. Replacement was tasked in 1997. The new documents contain valuable information and are user friendly.

***Sprouts.*** Sprouts have been implicated in numerous Salmonella outbreaks and in *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks. The sprout industry is well acquainted with the risk associated with their product and is working closely with FDA to improve the product safety. The industry initiatives arrived at by the industry in conjunction with FDA involve seed treatment with 20,000 PPM calcium hypochlorite (or equivalent chemical treatment), pathogen testing, and incorporation of HACCP. DECA placed warning placards in all commissaries consistent with current FDA warnings.

***Report and Recommendations of the FREC Juice Subcommittee.*** The FREC appointed a subcommittee to evaluate the health risks of treated and non-treated juices. The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods

(NACMCF) working in conjunction with the National Food Processors Association has established *E. coli*. O157:H7 and *Listeria monocytogenes* as the target organisms for juices. They determined that fresh juices can only be rendered safe by validated interventions that achieve a cumulative 5 log reduction in the target pathogen(s) or a reduction in yearly risk of illness to less than  $10^{-5}$ , assuming consumption of 100 ml of juice daily. Additionally, they are developing mandatory HACCP guidelines to be incorporated in the juice industry. The FREC recommended that DOD only purchase pasteurized juices until the interventions plus HACCP are established and processors identified that have employed them.

***RTE Sample Program.*** Chief Warrant Officer Killian presented a detailed review of proposed changes to the Army Veterinary Laboratory Sampling Program. The new program applies science based sampling procedures utilizing statistical methods. The program establishes broad based sampling over a wide spectrum and minimizes the number of samples per agency. Routine sanitation audit sampling and direct sample tied to vendor quality history are eliminated. Initial approval of an establishment can be completed with only one sample set. The program defines product categories and delineates types of products in each category.

***Development of an Army Food Managers Certification Program.*** Mr. McNeil, Senior Sanitarian, CHPPM noted the Army is revising the T-MED-530 (counterpart to NAVMED P-5010). During this process, they intend to develop an Army unique version of the Food Managers Certification. Cost and direct Army related issues are the driving force. I explained our efforts to this point and offered consultative assistance as they move forward.

***Rapid Pathogen Detection.*** A lengthy and spirited discussion ensued around the use of a battery of available Rapid Pathogen and Chemical Detection technologies. Demonstration projects in forward deployed areas have demonstrated dramatic results and favorable reports on a wide array of available tools (Petrifilm™, bioluminescence technologies, ELISA, et.al.) in making presumptive determinations for action. In some areas, the use has been extended into definitive bacteriological and chemical determinations, and even altered use of the tools. The benefit of the value of these technologies is generally accepted. The controversy revolves around the scope of their use. One camp clearly advocates following the process of doctrine development to determine the scope and applicability of the tools and the outcomes in the forward deployed environment and then adding them. The other camp advocates a more aggressive and immediate application in forward deployed areas. Beyond the direct discussion of a routine food safety application was a discussion of these tools and the protection of Food and Water in Chemical and Biological Warfare. Of course, permanent funding to add these items to the “arsenal”, requires the application of doctrine and a decision of which tools to deploy. Immediate procurement would be directly from existing operating funds. In point of fact,

both camps won the day. The doctrinal approach was approved and will be pursued. Meanwhile, individual officers in Forward Deployed areas will sell the benefit and applicability of these tools and gain support from the “line” community for their immediate use. I was asked whether we are using Rapid Pathogen and/or Chemical Detection in our Forward units.

*Cook/Chill in Okinawa.* Colonel Gary L. Andersen, Commander, Pacific Regional Veterinary Command, Tripler presented a PowerPoint presentation on a fully functional Cook-Chill operation at Camp Butler, Okinawa. Colonel Andersen visited the facility and is impressed with the operation. The Army Veterinarian community is supportive of the concept. Colonel Andersen and Chief Warrant Officer Killian indicated that the USMC contacted the Army Veterinary Corps to ask them to take over the monitoring and inspection of the facility because it is food production. There is no indication that Navy Preventive Medicine has been officially consulted regarding this operation or that concern for the applicability of NAVMED P-5010-1 or HACCP has been considered. The Army Veterinarians are willing and interested to be directly involved in this operation. I indicated that Army Veterinary involvement made sense and was, as always, welcome. However, I also stated that we must be involved in the monitoring, development and progress of any Food Service operation of the Navy/Marine Corps team. There was some indication that the Preventive Medicine personnel (no names) at Okinawa have been involved. I will pursue this further.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

As I noted above, this was an extremely valuable meeting and time well spent. Continued representation on this body and in all of its activities is vital to our interests. The FREC Coordinator stated that his experience over the past ten years has been that the Navy faces change often (year to year). He would prefer continuity for awareness of the issues. Although, I became acquainted with the issues rapidly, I understand his observation. As I indicated, I would be pleased to be the designated permanent member and will recommend that to LT Suraj. More importantly, we must be represented each time the FREC meets.

I will present pertinent excerpts of this report at the informal meeting that Dr. Morrow is arranging.

Thanks for the opportunity.

V/r

Charles

