

Frontline

Safeguarding Canada's Food, Animals and Plants

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Message from the President

WELCOME to the first issue of *Frontline*, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's newsletter. Our aim with *Frontline* is to regularly share information with our stakeholders about Agency business. *Frontline* will be published three times a year and will feature articles about the Agency's programs and services and about current issues covered by our mandate. Many of these issues will touch on the very real and personal aspects of the day-to-day lives of Canadians - issues like food recalls, safe food handling practices, biosecurity, products of biotechnology, and the importation of foreign food products. Our staff comprise the "frontline" in providing the services that help protect Canada's food supply and the health of our animals and plants. We hope that *Frontline* will keep you informed about our work on issues that are important to you.

After the events of September 11, 2001, the safety of Canadians and the need to protect our country's food supply, animal and plant resources, and environment have become more important than ever. Part of the Agency's mandate is to participate in emergency preparedness programs that can be called upon to respond to immediate threats. I am pleased to

say that the Agency, in cooperation with industry, other countries, and other government departments, acted quickly and decisively during this time of tragedy. Not only did Agency staff come together to answer the call to action, they did so with compassion, humanity and a dedication to duty in the aftermath of these events. Because of this, the Agency was recently recognized with a special commendation by the Head of the Public Service.

Canadians can remain confident that the CFIA is actively involved in preparing for any fight against the potential threat of bio-terrorism and will continue its efforts to protect them against diseases like foot-and-mouth.

As *Frontline* is a new venture, we welcome your feedback. We want to let you know about programs and services that may be outside of your current dealings with the Agency. If you have ideas for future articles, or questions that relate to our mandate, please contact the *Frontline* editor.

Now, I invite you to read on.

Ronald L. Doering
President

September 11, 2001

Emergency Preparedness Put to the Test



September 11th - flights lined up at Halifax International Airport.

On September 11th, the CFIA's emergency response management team hit the "frontline" responding to the terrorist attacks that day on the U.S. In Canada, the effects of the attacks were felt at airports and land border crossings. All planes destined for the U.S. were diverted to one of 13 Canadian airports. Traffic through land borders was slowed to a standstill as U.S. border

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World Leader in Food Safety

The CFIA plays role in new Agriculture Policy Framework

The Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments have developed a proposed agricultural policy aimed at making Canada the world leader in food safety, innovation, and environmentally responsible production.

Five components make up the agricultural policy framework: food safety and food quality, science and innovation, environment, renewal, and business risk management. The CFIA will play a major role in the food safety and food quality component. With funding and support from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and technical advice from the CFIA and the provincial governments, the national producer associations have been actively developing volunteer "On-Farm Food Safety Programs" based on the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point inspection system principles over the last decade. Now, the focus is on a recognition process for these on-farm food safety programs. The CFIA, along with its provincial counterparts, will be leading the review and formal recognition of the technical soundness of industry on-farm food safety plans.

A pilot project for the new recognition program was launched in November 2001 following a request from the Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC). Their food safety program – entitled "Safe, Safer, Safest" – was submitted to the CFIA for technical review, the first step of the recognition process.

The CFIA has successfully completed the technical review of the CFC's program. The Agency's recognition process is now ready to review new submissions from other industry associations and producer groups. And if industry is ready, the CFIA will have the final step of the recognition process ready for piloting by mid-summer 2002.

Streamlining the System

The CFIA Reviews Import Control Policy

The volume of agricultural and food imports into Canada has increased significantly over the past few years. The way the world does business is changing at an even faster rate. To address these issues, the Agency embarked on a review of its import policy, across all commodities, with the goal of making the policy more efficient, while maintaining the same high standards of food safety.

Protecting Canadians in the areas of food safety, animal health and plant protection means more than simply inspecting food, animals and plants produced here in Canada. The CFIA's work also extends to commodities being imported into our country.

Continuing to protect Canadians in an ever-changing environment prompted the Agency to conduct an import policy review and establish a task force charged with developing a discussion paper and draft import control policy; phase II of this initiative involves consultation and implementation of a re-designed import program.

The challenges of import control in the 21st century are making public policy development in this area increasingly complex. The CFIA believes an effective Import Control System is based on six elements: foreign equivalency/certification, point of entry control, tracking and informatics, importer quality management systems, inspection programs, and new technology. An integral part of all these elements is effective risk management, which enables the CFIA to target limited resources to those importers presenting the highest risks.

The Importer Quality Management System, an important element of the Agency's draft policy, is designed to control the safety and regulatory compliance of all commodities imported by a company into Canada. The system would allow the Agency to recognize importing companies that have integrated an accepted quality management system into their own operations. Those importers would



Courtesy of Jerry Dowding, CFIA

Waiting to cross the Windsor, Ontario border into the U.S.

be recognized as having the CFIA's confidence in their ability to respect the federal import regulations.

The net result of the new system will be to streamline treatment of the recognized companies, where applicable, by reducing the frequency of inspection of agricultural products imported, or by adjusting the fees the CFIA charges companies for its inspection services.

The challenges of import control in the twenty-first century are making public policy development in this area increasingly complex

Consultations were completed at the end of last year. A committee of industry representatives and CFIA officials is being assembled to further develop the implementation process for the revised import policy. For more information about developments in this initiative, visit the Agency's Web Site at: www.inspection.gc.ca for a copy of the draft *National Import Policy Strategy and Discussion Paper*.



Preparing for Tomorrow

CFIA Faces the Challenges of Biotechnology

The CFIA is responsible for regulating agricultural products of biotechnology. For example, for crops with novel traits, the Agency assesses the potential risk of adverse environmental effects before it allows studies in controlled field conditions or unconfined environmental release, oversees variety registration, and authorizes import permits.

These plant products reflect only the first wave of biotechnology. The Agency knows that scientists are already working on plants that can produce bio-pharmaceuticals (molecular farming) and other products. These new products will need to be regulated by federal regulatory departments and agencies, including the CFIA.

In regulating, there are a number of key issues for the Agency:

- having the right scientists on hand to do evaluations;
- staying abreast of the latest and the best regulatory knowledge;
- keeping our processes efficient and effective;
- conducting workshops with stakeholders;

- communicating with the public; and
- raising to new levels public involvement and awareness of biotechnology and regulation.

To help the Agency achieve its objectives, the 2000 federal budget provided \$10 million per year to the Agency and about \$20 million per year to the rest of the federal regulatory community, to regulate agri-food and other products of biotechnology. Today, the CFIA is putting these dollars to work by hiring staff, conducting research, and communicating with the public.

The Agency wants the public to know its capabilities and capacities are being strengthened. Make no mistake - in regulating biotechnology, now and in the future, the CFIA remains vigilant in continuing to safeguard Canada's food supply as well as protect our environment and the health of animals and plants.

For more information on biotechnology, go to: www.inspection.gc.ca/english/toc/bioteche.shtml.

landed at Gander, Newfoundland alone - the population of Gander is just under 10,000 people. Forty planes were landed and none took off for over two hours.

The land borders posed other unique problems as lanes of trucking traffic were held at the U.S.-Canada border waiting for, what became, an intensive inspection. The CFIA placed more staff at the border points, primarily in Ontario, where volume was a particular problem. To address the backlog, Agency staff combed the lanes of waiting vehicles to identify and manage expeditiously the inspection process for shipments of perishable goods and live animals.

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You Can FightBAC!™ for Food Safety

Follow these four quick and easy steps to reduce the incidence of food-borne illness in your household.

- Clean:** wash hands and surfaces often.
- Separate:** don't cross-contaminate.
- Cook:** cook to proper temperatures.
- Chill:** refrigerate promptly.

These are the four key messages of the *FightBAC!*™ consumer education campaign, designed to give consumers the knowledge they need to keep themselves and their families safe from food-borne illness.

Consumers of all ages are a focus, but a recent project was designed to introduce safe food handling tips to a younger crowd. The *Grades 4 to 7 Learning Program: FightBAC! For Food Safety* was launched in April 2001. With its colourful mascot, Bac!™ (short for "Bacteria"), the program teaches children ages 9 to 12, the four key food safety steps to "FightBAC!" This program builds on the success of the *Kindergarten to Grade 3 Learning Program*, which was launched in 2000. Various educational materials are available for teachers to introduce the science behind these important food safety steps.

The CFIA is a member of the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education, a public-private partnership created to educate consumers about their role in food safety. Founded in 1997, this coalition of industry, consumer, government, health and environmental organizations has banded together to develop and deliver a national food safety awareness program. Check it out @ www.canfightbac.org



Emergency Preparedness

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controls intensified. This unprecedented act of violence against the U.S. significantly affected the normal movement of food, animal and plant products.

CFIA staff were mobilized and ready to be dispatched to airports to provide inspection services to the increased number of international flights landing in Canada. As many flights were handled on September 11th and 12th as are normally handled in a month! Together with their colleagues at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, CFIA officials inspected arriving passengers and their hand baggage. More than 6,500 passengers

The Court Brief

News from Enforcement & Investigation Services

Be Aware You Must Declare... it's the Law! Many travellers don't realize that when entering Canada, they are required to declare all animal and plant products being imported, either verbally or on their Customs declaration card. Bringing Grandma's homemade sausages or flower bulbs into the country, without declaring them, has the potential to cause a disease outbreak and could threaten our food supply, environment and economy! One undeclared sausage could cause a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak similar to that experienced in the U.K. last spring.

Most travellers do declare and notify the Customs or CFIA inspectors at the border of any plant or animal products they bring with them. These officials have the right to seize products and dispose of them, with no other consequence to travellers.

However, when a traveller fails to declare animal or plant products and a CFIA official discovers it, the Administrative Monetary Penalty System, or AMPs, gives the Agency inspectors the authority to issue a penalty.

The AMPs program was rolled out in 2000 in Canada's largest international airports - Pearson (Toronto), Dorval and Mirabel (Montreal), and Vancouver. In 2001, AMPs was implemented in three more airports (Edmonton, Calgary and Halifax).

Watch the Web Site at: www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/publications/declare.shtml to keep tabs on future developments of this program.

For information on recent prosecutions, check the Web Site: www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/projud/projude.shtml.



Helping Fight Foot-and-Mouth Disease



Don Long, CFIA Animal Health technician and Dr. Graeme Stott, CFIA veterinarian helping fight FMD overseas.

2001 was a hectic year for the CFIA, as Agency staff worked to fight foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) abroad and helped prevent FMD from entering Canada.

The news of the crisis was heard around the world. The CFIA's role in helping to bring the FMD crisis under control is a story that few, at least in Canada, have heard.

On February 21, 2001, the European Commission (EC) imposed a ban on British food exports and a worldwide ban on shipments of cattle and meat. That action was prompted by the first outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease to hit Britain in 20 years. FMD, which affects cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and deer, is not a human health concern, but is highly contagious and often fatal in animals. Slaughter and containment are the only effective means of controlling FMD, so the impact of the disease is devastating.

In Britain, the agricultural emergency that had been gathering momentum in the barns and on the moors of rural England and Wales, had become an economic and political crisis. By mid-March, Britain's National Farmers' Union claimed that the epidemic was out of control. News coverage of ruin for British farmers and devastation to the nation's food industry was alarming. Canadians began to fear for the safety of their own farms.

When Canada was informed of the situation and the EC's actions, the CFIA immediately prepared for action. Enhanced import controls and increased inspections were initiated at once to protect Canada's livestock. The Agency also extended its expertise to its colleagues in Britain.

Slaughter and containment are the only effective means of controlling FMD

Under the recently updated International Animal Health Emergency Reserve Agreement, to which Canada is a signatory, the Agency organized the dispatch of 51 federally-sponsored veterinarians and 15 animal technicians to the U.K. Between March and September 2001, seven groups of these specialists were sent, each for a three-week period. They joined the British and international teams of vets and technicians in their efforts to deal with the emergency.

Canada's contingent had a range of skills critical to the situation in Britain, including expertise in diagnosis, pathology, inspection, depopulation (slaughter), movement tracing and disinfection. Many had participated in

FMD recognition course training at the National Centre for Foreign Animal Disease in Winnipeg.

We are continuing to be vigilant and proactive in our efforts to protect Canada from FMD

Dr. Dorothy Geale, of CFIA's Animal Health and Production Division, was in charge of coordinating Canada's contribution. Dr. Geale recounts some of the challenges experienced by the Canadians: "It was wet and cold at the beginning, and staff worked 12-14 hour days, often seven days a week. There was the emotional stress of dealing with farm families about to lose their livelihoods and of dealing with demonstrators at the outbreak centres. Other countries sent technical experts and vets as well, to assist the British teams. It was heartening to see the international co-operation, but it was a challenge to have so many languages involved!"

The far-reaching effects of the situation were brought home in a May report by Dr. Dave Green of the British Columbia Area Emergency Response Team. "With the warm weather coming on, the sheep need to be

shorn," he explained. "Shearing is usually done by itinerant workers, who move from farm to farm. This is not possible with all the restrictions in place, and few farmers shear their own sheep, as it takes quite a crew. The wool is starting to fall off the sheep, and could pose a hazard for spreading FMD if it is blown from infected to uninfected farms."

While Canadian vets and technical experts gained valuable first-hand experience battling FMD in Britain, CFIA staff here at home kept busy with the on-going task of keeping Canada protected from FMD. The Agency has continued to enhance existing FMD contingency plans, in partnership with provincial emergency response organizations, and developed an FMD outbreak response training program for Canada. Reports from participants in the U.K. were used to update CFIA preparedness strategies and procedure manuals. This complemented a public awareness campaign launched by the CFIA last May aimed at the prevention of FMD in Canada. In addition to posting enhanced signage, airlines and airports across the country distributed CFIA brochures to warn the travelling public of the dangers of FMD and of the precautions they must take to keep the disease out of Canada.

Susanne Frost, CFIA Director of Enforcement and Investigation Services, headed up the Agency's Task Force on FMD. Though the Task Force is no longer operational, the Agency continues to monitor the ongoing situation and stands ready to respond to any changes. "We are continuing to be vigilant and proactive in our efforts to protect Canada from FMD," says Ms. Frost. "While the situation in Britain is stabilizing, FMD is a problem in many other countries around the world, so we can't become complacent. The message of the public awareness campaign is that we all have a role to play in keeping Canada safe from FMD, so everyone's continuing cooperation with travel and import advisories is very important."

The Agency has also attracted Dr. Paul Kitching to head up its National Centre for Foreign Animal Diseases laboratory in Winnipeg. Dr. Kitching, a world-renowned



Courtesy of Doug MacLeod, CFIA

Strict bio-security measures, including disinfection, must be followed.

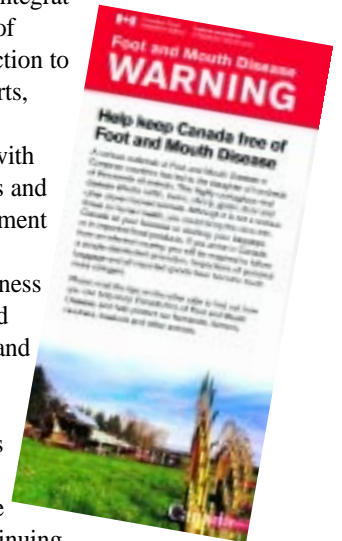
expert on FMD, came to the CFIA from the World Reference Laboratory in Pirbright, England. Dr. Kitching brings with him many years of international research and direct experience with the outbreak in the U.K..

Through an integrated response of immediate action to restrict imports, planning and preparation with the provinces and other government departments, public awareness activities, and cooperation and support with international organizations and other countries, the CFIA is continuing to work hard to keep FMD out of this country. Canadians can further reduce the risks by following a few simple precautionary measures, found on our Web Site or in our FMD brochure.

To see the full range of CFIA information on FMD, go to the CFIA Web Site at: www.inspection.gc.ca.



FMD posters and disinfectant mats in place at Canadian airports across the country.



Courtesy of CFIA

From the Lab

Burnaby Lab keeps a close eye on West Coast oyster stocks

Every year, for a variety of reasons, a small number of people become ill after eating raw oysters. In 1997, an outbreak of unprecedented scope occurred. More than 100 people in British Columbia, who had consumed raw oysters, were confirmed ill due to a natural marine bacterium, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (*Vp*). The CFIA Burnaby Laboratory was called on to develop the lab response capability required by the region within a very short time. Within 10 days, the lab received samples to be tested and analyzed.

When the immediate crisis was over, and the lab had proved equal to the task, the CFIA focused on the issue of ongoing monitoring of oyster beds to avoid another outbreak of illness in the future. In partnership with other government and industry stakeholders, a *Vp* risk-reduction strategy was developed. As part of the strategy, the CFIA worked with industry representatives to develop practices to control *Vp* growth and implemented a monitoring program during the summer months.

Early in 2000, the Burnaby Lab began evaluating new methods to detect pathogenic or harmful strains of *Vp*. Data gathered from this work, combined with environmental projects in 2000 conducted with industry partners, were used to adjust industry's operating practices. The *Vp* risk-reduction strategy was successful in keeping the number of reported *Vp* illnesses to single-digit numbers after the 1997 outbreak.

The Burnaby Lab is currently completing the first year of a two-year project to validate a new methodology that will improve the existing *Vp* monitoring program. Preliminary data from this work is showing promise and should reduce the time for reporting lab results. Ultimately, the project will contribute greater laboratory capacity for illness response.

The Canadian Institute for Food Inspection and Regulation Building Harmony for the Future

The Agency and the University of Guelph formalize their relationship and create a unique Canadian research and educational program in food safety regulation.

For our guest feature, *Frontline* speaks with the Interim Director of the Canadian Institute for Food Inspection and Regulation (CIFIR), Dr. Jim Pettit.

F: In the first issue of *Frontline*, Jim, we focus on a unique partnering arrangement between the Agency and the University of Guelph. Tell us how it got started.

In January 2000, the CFIA and the University of Guelph (U of G), signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a three year pilot project – the creation of a Canadian Institute for Food Inspection and Regulation. The Institute is an exciting new collaborative venture between the university community and government. The intent is to promote and advance food regulatory research, education and communication in Canada, and also to support science policy and development in the CFIA. The MOU builds on a long-standing and successful relationship between the CFIA and U of G. The Agency continues to be the single largest employer of the University's agriculture and veterinary graduates.

F: Where is CIFIR located?

CIFIR operates within existing facilities at the University of Guelph, and is co-located with the Canadian Research Institute for Food Safety, on campus at 43 McGillivray St.

F: Tell us more about what the agreement entails.

The MOU provides for the Institute to pursue collaborative opportunities in areas of mutual interest. In addition to the Interim Director, there are two other individuals in CIFIR: the CFIA Regulatory Chair, Joan Wakeman; and the Office Manager, Pat Nolan. Joan Wakeman was appointed September 2000 as the first Regulatory Chair, and has proved to be the right person at the right time. Pat Nolan brings a wealth of experience in administration to the business. In our role as a liaison office, we act as catalysts by facilitating, communicating, and negotiating to bring people together to build and expand the network in the scientific community. We've been active in facilitating several initiatives that should prove beneficial to both parties.

F: What progress have you made with the new Institute?

CIFIR has made progress on all fronts covered by the MOU. One important initiative is the development of a Joint Research Committee to identify research priorities and



Photo: Martin Schwabe

Canadian Institute for Food Inspection and Regulation staff: (from left to right) Joan Wakeman, CFIA Regulatory Chair; Dr. Jim Pettit, Interim Director; Pat Nolan, Office Manager.

the establishment of a CFIA Regulatory Chair to help guide the research program. The Institute has also created three other supporting committees – a communication, an academic and advisory committee, to support and advise the Director and the Regulatory Chair. The CFIA has supported four CFIA President's Graduate Assistantship awards at the University: two in January 2001 and two in September 2001, to students pursuing graduate studies in biotechnology and other areas of interest to the CFIA. Our commitment to facilitate hiring up to 10 co-op students has been successful. There were 17 hired in 2000, and 25 hired in 2001. The University's SPARK (*Students Promoting Awareness of Research Knowledge*) program, which provides opportunities for student writers, is producing a number of articles about the CFIA, to raise awareness about the Agency's business and services. CIFIR is also setting up its own Web Site.

F: What do you see the Institute doing in the future?

We have many more opportunities under review by both organizations, such as participation in SHARC-Net, the University's new super computer system, the Canadian Research Institute for Food Safety (CRIFS) and the Food Systems Biotechnology Centre and CANARIE Inc., an interactive education-

al resource. As CIFIR evolves, it is expected the Institute will change and grow. We anticipate the number of staff connections will increase, as we explore and develop other opportunities in the areas of research, education and communication. This year, we're evaluating and examining the operation of CIFIR and developing plans for the future.

F: CIFIR – What will be its legacy?

I expect the Institute will become a valuable member of the scientific community. Our strength will be in building and reaching across our network of researchers and educators in the scientific community to develop and promote collaboration where it may otherwise not have existed. Our efforts in promoting linkages and harmonizing research activities, and in sharing scientific expertise by supporting existing programs and facilitating the development of new educational opportunities, may well be one of the most important aspects of CIFIR.

For more information on CIFIR, please call (519) 824-4120; ext. 3664/3431, or write to the Canadian Institute for Food Inspection and Regulation, 43 McGillvray Street, Guelph, ON, N1G 2W1. The new Web site is under construction @ www.cifir.ca or at www.iciar.ca.

While the situation continues to evolve and the CFIA's response is ongoing, the readiness of frontline staff in the first week illustrated the Agency's best possible performance, given the unique and dramatic circumstances of the day.

 **Emergency Preparedness**
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Livestock shipments were dealt with as a priority in order to prevent any pain and suffering to animals. To avert additional border traffic on the days that followed, CFIA industry bulletins were forwarded to Canadian food producers, processors, distributors, and importers/exporters. The bulletins explained the impact the situation might have on their operations, asked for their patience and cooperation, and offered support for special circumstances.

All of this was made possible because the Agency worked through expanded relationships with a wide range of emergency organizations and personnel at the federal, provincial and municipal levels.

The Reg Report

An Update on Recent Regulatory Amendments

In safeguarding food safety, animal health and plant protection, the Agency is responsible for the administration and enforcement of 13 federal acts and dozens of related regulations. Through related activities at the Agency, these regulations are constantly being up-dated and adapted to deal with the complexities and challenges faced by the food chain and environment in Canada.

Regulations Amending the Plant Protection Regulations (Potato Wart Compensation) (November 7, 2001)

The amendment to the *Plant Protection Regulations* compensates potato growers who have incurred financial losses as a result of compliance with phytosanitary measures, to address the potato wart disease, ordered by the CFIA in May 2001. Potato wart is a disease caused by the presence of the soil-borne fungal pathogen, *Synchytrium endobioticum*. Although not harmful to humans, this disease, of quarantine significance, rendered potatoes unmarketable and reduced yield.

Regulations Amending the Livestock and Poultry Carcass Grading Regulations (Beef Standards) (October 10, 2001)

The *Canada Agriculture Products Act* provides the authority to make regulations establishing grade, standards and legends for agriculture products. This amendment addresses a number of issues related to beef carcass grading standards including: the reduction of the minimum fat requirement, modification of the muscling requirement, facilitation of the introduction of new grading technology and recognition of alternatives to carcass roller branding. The amendment does not make any changes to the palatability of beef, nor will it impose additional costs on industry or consumers. The proposed amendment eliminates some of the current costs associated with roller branding, a labour intensive process in slaughter establishments.

For more background information and the text of each amendment, check the CFIA Web Site at: www.inspection.gc.ca/english/reg/approe.shtml.

Bottled Water - Is it a Safety Concern?

In times of water recalls and boil water alerts, the CFIA is front and centre in assessing the Canadian food industry's capability to produce safe bottled water.

Bottled water sold to the Canadian consumer at a wide range of retail outlets is regulated under the *Food and Drugs Act* and *Regulations*, Division 12. These regulations apply to mineral and spring water from specified sources, and to other bottled waters, such as distilled water or bottled water from municipal supply systems. The safety of bottled water depends largely on the processing and quality control measures in place at the bottled-water manufacturers' plant.

In 2000, the CFIA assessed 125 bottled-water manufacturers to ensure that adequate controls were in place and that products were safe. Further to these assessments, samples were obtained from the manufacturing plants for bacteriological analysis. Several domestic and imported bottled waters were sampled as well, at the retail level across Canada.

The overall results indicated there were no major health risks related to the bottled water industry in Canada. The majority of the manufacturers met the assessment criteria. However, approximately 11 percent required follow-up action to ensure that appropriate control measures were in place. One of the samples obtained during the manufacturer assessments was found to contain *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, a bacteria that can lead to gastrointestinal illness or other more serious consequences, and a product recall was quickly initiated. Less than 2 percent of the samples required further corrective action because of slightly elevated bacterial



© Canadian Bottled Water Association (CBWA)

counts. All 148 retail samples collected were found to be satisfactory.

The watch goes on... In April 2001, an assessment at a British Columbia manufacturer led to a recall, where various sizes of bottled water containers were found to contain *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. As a follow-up to an outbreak of *cryptosporidium* in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, last spring, resulting from contamination of the municipal water supply, three bottled-water operations in the area were assessed by CFIA inspectors. The investigations concluded that all three bottlers had suitable controls in place to prevent the presence of unsafe bacteria in their products.

Water and its safety is something that most consumers no longer take for granted. The knowledge that assessments are undertaken at Canadian bottled-water manufacturers and of bottled-water products sold in Canada should help alleviate some of the concerns consumers may have about the water they are drinking.

The EU Turns Up the Heat

To meet the European Union's new import standards for wood packaging, the CFIA has introduced a new wood packaging certification program.

As of October 1, 2001, coniferous wood packaging, including packaging constructed of Douglas fir, spruce, pine, fir and other coniferous woods (except cedar) exported to the EU, must be heat-treated in an officially approved manner that will eliminate the softwood pest, pinewood nematode (*Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*). The pinewood nematode is a microscopic roundworm that lives and feeds on tissues within coniferous trees and is carried or vectored by wood-boring beetles to uninfected trees. Similar measures have already been taken for wood packaging materials destined for Finland, and for China via the United States. The regulations apply to packing cases, boxes, crates, drums, pallets, box pallets, load boards, pallet collars and similar packaging.

The Agency's New Program

To allow Canadian exporters to continue to ship products transported in wood packaging materials, the CFIA, Canadian Forestry Service, and representatives from the softwood, hardwood and wood packaging industry developed the Canadian Wood Packaging Certification Program (CWPCP) to meet the EU's new import requirements. Under the program, regulated wood packaging material bound for EU markets must be manufactured at a CFIA-certified wood packaging facility, and must display an approved stamp for easy identification on arrival in the EU. Alternatively, exporters can produce wood packaging using materials that are exempt from the new European requirements.

In Effect Now

The implementation date was October 1, 2001. Canadian and EU officials, along with officials of other countries, are committed to developing an international standard for wood packaging materials that could be globally implemented as early as the fall of 2002. For more information, go to our Web Site at: www.inspection.gc.ca.

FRONTLINE

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