



Model Aquatic Health Code in Development

Swimming is the third most popular exercise activity in the United States, and in a time of rising obesity concerns, exercise is something to be celebrated. However, it's important to make sure that swimming remains fun and people don't get sick from contaminants in pools.

As board of health members understand, swimming pools can become contaminated with waterborne disease pathogens and cause diarrheal illnesses. The number of reported illness outbreaks in treated recreational waters has increased steadily since 1978, with an even more notable increase since 1997. A CDC analysis of pool inspection data found that 12% of inspections resulted in immediate pool closure.

Sixty-five percent of environmental health programs have programs to ensure the safety of swimming pools and spas, but local boards of health may not always be aware of these programs. A national interdisciplinary Steering Committee and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are leading a collaborative effort to develop a Model Aquatic Health Code. The Model Aquatic Health Code is being developed through a series of technical committees, and will likely be an ongoing process to be periodically updated based on the latest science. Many of the nation's pool codes are out of date and don't reflect

current science. By adopting the code, boards of health will ensure that their pool and spa inspection programs are based on the latest science to reduce risk for their constituents. Furthermore, having consistent codes makes it easier for industry to comply, especially when they operate in multiple jurisdictions.

Developing evidence-based codes takes a significant amount of time and expertise. By adopting the Model Aquatic Health Code, boards of health and their communities immediately benefit from this expertise without having to go through a resource-intensive process. Adopting the code may also make good economic sense. A recent study estimates that the hospitalization costs for just three common waterborne diseases are between \$154-539 million dollars a year.

Local boards of health are a key partner in adopting policies and codes such as this one to reduce risks to the community's health. To learn more about the Model Aquatic Health Code, visit CDC's Healthy Swimming website at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/mahc/>.

For more information on the articles in the Environmental Health section, contact Carrie Hribar at carrie@nalboh.org.

Egg Recall Underscores Importance of Federal Food Safety Legislation

The recent salmonella outbreak and egg recall has renewed interest in food safety legislation that still is awaiting a vote in the Senate. The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (S. 510) would give the FDA additional regulatory tools to help prevent foodborne disease outbreaks. Food safety advocates are arguing that the bill could have helped prevent the salmonella outbreak that sickened over 1,500 people and led to the recall of 550 million eggs.

The House of Representatives passed their version of the food safety legislation in July of 2009. Both the House and the Senate bills would require food facilities to maintain food safety plans and would enable the FDA to inspect these facilities more frequently. Both bills would also give the FDA power to order mandatory recalls if food contamination occurs or is suspected, a power it currently does not have. The House and the Senate bill would also require the FDA to improve food traceability to help investigate food contamination.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest, Consumer Federation of America, and U.S. Public Interest Research Group published a study that found

that 85 food recalls which have sickened over 1,850 people have occurred since July 30, 2009, when the House passed their food safety reform legislation. This legislation, if passed, would be the biggest overhaul to food safety laws since 1938, when the FDA was given authority to oversee the safety of food, drugs, and cosmetics.

The bill has bipartisan support, and is also backed by a coalition of corporate and consumer groups, including The Food Marketing Institute, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Snack Food Association, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest. There is currently no timeline for a floor vote for the Senate bill as it was shelved through the Senate break for mid-term elections in November.

Board of health members should recognize the importance of The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act for protecting public health and contact their legislators to urge them to support the bill. Now is the time to advocate for the needed changes to our food system. Senator contact information is available online through the Senate website at http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.

Use of Antibiotics in CAFOs a Growing Concern

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently released guidelines on the use of antibiotics in factory farms and many public health experts say the guidelines are long overdue. But do the new FDA guidelines go far enough?

For many years, factory farms have used antibiotics on completely healthy animals to promote faster growth and prevent disease that could occur due to the confined living space. Medical and public health experts alike believe that the overuse of antibiotics pose a serious public health threat to humans by creating new and potentially untreatable new strains of bacteria. In a letter to Congress Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), wrote that there is "compelling evidence of a clear link between antibiotic use in animals and antibiotic resistance in humans." The meat industry however is highly skeptical of the studies which they believe do not clearly identify animals as the sole source of antibiotic resistance in humans. They also believe that the use of antibiotics results in healthier animals that are safer and of much better quality to consumers at a cheaper price.

Regardless, these are still only guidelines and are voluntary which means no enforcement. Recommendations and information for local boards of health on factory farms can be found by contacting the NALBOH office.

NALBOH's Latest Publication a Success

NALBOH unveiled its latest publication, Understanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and Their Impact on Communities, at the 18th NALBOH Annual Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. Since then, over 300 copies of the guidance document have been distributed to local boards of health in multiple states. The document provides guidance to enable board of health members to develop and sustain environmental monitoring programs, investigate developing policy related to CAFOs, and create partnerships with other local and state agencies and public officials to improve the health of their local communities. For more information on how to receive your copy of the publication, please contact the NALBOH office.