

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact, no statement issued

Action: Do Pass
Vote: 7 - 0 - 0
Yeas: Berger, Buckley, Esquivel, Hunt, Roblan, Thatcher, Rosenbaum
Nays: -
Exc.: -
Prepared By: Jim Stenbridge, Administrator
Meeting Dates: 5/14

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Creates five-member Task Force on Food Safety to study and report on the safety of human and animal food production, manufacture, distribution, and sale in Oregon, to be staffed by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Directs Task Force to report its findings and legislative recommendations to an interim legislative committee by February 3, 2008. Declares emergency, takes effect upon passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Recent food contamination events and the extent of that contamination
- Safety of food for pets as well as food for people
- Current food-safety procedures involving the Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Global economies and changing food distributions
- Concerns that emergency clause overstates the actual level of crisis
- Quality of food grown and manufactured in Oregon

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: While the food supply in the United States is considered to be among the safest in the world, the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 76 million people get sick, more than 300,000 are hospitalized, and 5,000 Americans die each year from food-borne illness. According to the CDC, preventing food-borne illness and death remains a major public health challenge.

On March 16, Menu Foods, Inc., a private-label pet food manufacturer based in Streetsville, Ontario, Canada, recalled dog and cat foods produced at two of its facilities between Dec. 3, 2006, and March 6, 2007, and sold under some 100 different brand names. Since then, several other companies also have voluntarily withdrawn products from the market. By April 22, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had determined that rice protein concentrate imported from China, contaminated with melamine and melamine-related compounds, was the culprit.

The federal government's food safety website—run jointly by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—is at <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>.