

Overview:

Consumer

Reports...

ASMI

Presentation

1-16-92

Burson-Marsteller

January 16, 1992

VIA FAX: 907/463-3273
10:30 a.m.

MARY GORE
ALASKA SEAFOOD MARKETING INSTITUTE

Dear Mary:

As anticipated, coverage of the Consumer Reports study has been extensive this morning. Following, for your information, is a quick recap of confirmed coverage to date:

Print (faxed under separate cover):

- Associated Press
- USA Today
- Wall Street Journal
- New York Times
- Chicago Tribune
- San Francisco Chronicle
- PR Newswire

Broadcast:

- "Today"/NBC-TV
- "Good Morning America"/ABC-TV
- "CBS This Morning"/CBS-TV
- Cable News Network (news segment repeated four times)
- KABC-TV/Los Angeles (two news segments)
- KFWB-AM/Los Angeles
- KNX-AM/Los Angeles
- KBIG-FM/Los Angeles
- KPWR-FM/Los Angeles
- KCBS-AM/San Francisco
- WJBK-TV/Detroit (CBS affiliate)
- WPVI-TV/Philadelphia (ABC affiliate)

- more -

Mary Gore
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute
January 16, 1992
Page Two

Broadcast (Cont'd.):

- WCVB-TV/Boston (ABC affiliate)
- WOR-AM/New York
- WCBS-AM/New York
- WMAQ-AM/Chicago
- WBBM-AM/Chicago

We have ordered tapes and transcripts of all television coverage. We will fax you the transcripts as soon as we receive them and will ship you all tapes via overnight delivery. We have ordered transcripts of all radio coverage and will fax these to you also as soon as we receive them.

We will keep you posted and will call you to discuss this coverage. Meanwhile, please call me or Genevieve if you have any questions or need anything else.

Regards,



Marty Gordon

cc: GSilberman
ATortorella

Nation/world

Tainted fish widespread, study claims

Jan 16 1992
Chicago Tribune

NEW YORK—In a study of the safety of food in retail fish markets in New York City and Chicago, Consumers Union has found widespread contamination and mislabeling of seafood.

The study was based on 113 samples of fish and claims that were purchased in 40 randomly selected supermarkets and specialty fish shops. The group found that 34 samples were spoiled, 50 were contaminated with fecal coliforms, and 8 of 20 samples of swordfish had more than the permissible level of mercury. What's more, one-third of the sample, taken from a number of different stores, were misidentified, usually as a more expensive variety.

The study contended that there were abuses in handling seafood all along the chain from the fishing vessel to the retail store. But it placed the largest share of the blame at the retail level.

"We clearly know we did not cover the whole waterfront," said Edward Groth, associate technical director of Consumers Union. "We think the look we took is big enough and reliable enough to say there is a problem."

Unlike meat and poultry, the handling of fish is largely unregulated by the federal government, and this report bolsters the contention of independent consumer advocacy groups like the Public Voice for Food and Health Policy that mandatory seafood inspection is necessary.

But the Federal Food and Drug Administration called the findings overblown and said a case could not be made on such a small sampling in just two cities.

Nonetheless, Lee Weddig, executive vice president of the National Fish Producers Association, a trade association of marketers and processors, acknowledged that the study was "not all that bad as an indicator of the conditions in those areas."

And Richard Lord, a consultant to the Fulton Fish Market in Manhattan who is a recognized authority on fish, said Consumers Union's assertions were justified. "You cannot contradict the report," he said.

The study, which will appear in

The study, which will appear in the February issue of Consumer Reports magazine, looked at several species: salmon, flounder, sole, c fish, swordfish, lake whitefish and clams.

Both Weddig and Douglas Cherr, deputy director of the FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, took issue with bacterial standards used by Consumers Union.



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A BUREAU OF AMERICA

TRANSCRIPT

DATE January 16, 1992
TIME 6:30 - 7:00 AM
STATION WPVI-TV (ABC) Channel Six
LOCATION Philadelphia
PROGRAM Action News

Monica Malpass, anchor:

An important warning if you often buy raw seafood in the supermarket. A series of tests just released by Consumer Reports magazine has found that the seafood in the supermarket is frequently spoiled or contaminated by pollutants. Officials say half the fish tested was contaminated by fecal bacteria and by varying degrees of PCB's. However, they added that if you cooked the fish properly, it probably would not make you sick.

RADIO TV REPORTS

41 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

FOR	BURSON MARSTELLER	STATION	CNN/TV
PROGRAM	BUSINESS MORNING (NEWS UPDATE)	CITY	NEW YORK
DATE	JANUARY 16, 1992	AUDIENCE	6:48 A.M.

BROADCAST EXCERPT

PATRICK GREENLAW: A new report is warning that much of the raw seafood at stores in the United States may be spoiled or contaminated by pollutants. The magazine Consumer Reports today released the findings of a six-month investigation. Fresh fish from stores and supermarkets in Chicago and New York were tested. Consumer Reports says retailers and others who handle fish are to blame for the spoilage, but the magazine says cooking probably removes any danger of immediate sickness. The National Fisheries Institute disputes the magazine's findings.

JAN-16-1992 11:50 FROM B-M/LOS ANGELES

TO 7802466919074633273 P.07
PAGE.000

JAN 16 '92 13:51 FROM BOSTON



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A BURELLES Article

DATE
TIME
STATION
LOCATION
PROGRAM

January 16, 1992
5:30-7:00 AM
WCVB-TV (ABC) Channel Five
Boston
Newscenter Five Eyeopener

TRANSCRIPT

Jim Boyd, co-anchor:

A new study raises major questions now about the quality and safety of seafood sold in local stores. Consumer Reports magazine conducted a six month investigation and found that much of the raw seafood sold across the counter is spoiled or contaminated by pollutants (Visual of a fish market in New Haven, Connecticut). The magazine says almost thirty percent of the fish tested was spoiled and nearly half was contaminated by bacteria. Here's one positive note. The study also concludes that cooking that seafood thoroughly should prevent sickness.

JAN-16-92 THU 14:48 V M S DETROIT

P.02



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A BURRELLE'S AIRMAIL

TRANSCRIPT

DATE January 15, 1992
TIME 11:00-11:30 PM
STATION WJBK-TV(CBS) Channel Two
LOCATION Detroit
PROGRAM Eyewitness News

Sherry Margolis, co-anchor:

Well we expect the fish that we buy at seafood and grocery stores to be wholesome and fresh, but a six month investigation conducted by Consumer Reports reveals that in many cases that is not so.

Consumer Reports had an independent lab analyze one hundred and thirteen samples of salmon, sole, flounder, and catfish bought in New York and Chicago. [Graphic: Consumer Reports Fish Investigation: 30% spoiled, 9% nearly spoiled, 50% contaminated by feces] Nearly 30% was already spoiled; another 9% was nearly spoiled. Half the fish samples were found to be contaminated by human and animal feces. Unfortunately this is just the tip of the iceberg.

We will have much more on the fish investigation tomorrow on First News at 6:00PM.

Huel Perkins, co-anchor: Just one more reason for me not to eat fish.



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A **BURBULET** Affiliate

TRANSCRIPT

DATE January 16, 1992
TIME 7:00-9:00 AM
NETWORK CBS-TV
PROGRAM CBS This Morning

HARRY SMITH, co-anchor:

A new report says much of the raw fish Americans buy is contaminated. A six-month investigation by Consumer Reports magazine found that almost forty per cent of the fish and other seafood bought in stores is spoiled or on the verge of spoiling. It blames the people who handle it on the way to you, and the magazine says the seafood is unlikely to make you sick, that is, if you cook it thoroughly.



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A **RUSSELL'S** Atlanta

TRANSCRIPT

DATE January 16, 1992
TIME 7:00-9:00 AM
NETWORK ABC-TV
PROGRAM Good Morning America

Joan Lunden, co-host:

It's high in protein and low in fat so it's no wonder that health-conscious Americans are eating more and more fish every year but a six-month study by Consumer Reports magazine raises some troubling questions about the quality of fresh fish in this country. The magazine hits the newsstands this month and consumer editor Paula Lyons has a first look at the findings.

Paula Lyons reporting:

Fresh fish. It's one of the most perishable foods we eat. Time and temperature are its enemies. Once fish leaves water it has, according to experts consulted by Consumer Reports, a shelf life of seven to twelve days at best if it is kept very cold, between thirty and thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit. If not, deterioration is factor. (Visual of fishing vessel; fish store)

But think about this. Some fish stays out on the boat five or six days. It may spend another two being processed and transported to a store near you where it could conceivably sit a few more days before you come along and buy it.

So Consumer Reports says you have two problems as a fish consumer. You don't know how long the fish you buy has been out of the water and you don't know at what temperature it's been stored along the way.

An experienced nose can spot bad fish, of course. You can smell it when it starts to turn. But a far more accurate way to measure fish deterioration is to test it in a laboratory and measure the bacteria. That's exactly what Consumer Reports decided to do and report on in its February issue. (Visual of man sniffing a fish; laboratory workers testing fish; Consumer Reports cover Is Our Fish Fit To Eat?)

Its shoppers purchased seven popular species of fish in supermarkets and fish stores in the New York and Chicago metropolitan areas. In all they sent one hundred and thirteen samples in refrigerated containers to an outside testing laboratory. The first test was for freshness and quality. (Graphic: Salmon Swordfish Catfish Clams Lake Whitefish Flounder Sole) (Visual of fish samples in the laboratory)

Trudy Lieberman (Reporter, Consumer Reports): We found an awful lot of fish that was past its prime and not very fresh. Some

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Buy... Use your nose Refrigerate quickly Wash hands,
surfaces, utensils Cook thoroughly)
Finally, you might want to speak up about it.

Groth: We think the responsible government agencies at the local level, at the state level, and at the federal level ought to hear from consumers that fish quality isn't what it should be. (Visual of diners at a restaurant)

Lieberman: I think that if people are going to eat more fish, and we all think that people should eat more fish, then they deserve to eat good food and I think as people become better able to choose quality and reject those products that are not very good quality, maybe the retailers will pay more attention.

Lunden: And Paula Lyons joins us now. What is the reaction from the fishing industry and retailers about this report?

Lyons: Well, obviously they're not happy. The marine fish- the National Fisheries Institute which represents processors for the most part had some real problems with the methodologies that Consumer Reports used, have real problems with the way they represented chemical contaminants, which is another part of their story, but they and the Food Marketing Institute, which represents retailers, admit that these problems of deterioration from poor care do exist, and they are now working on a pilot program in cooperation with the FDA and retailers, to try and improve those habits, but- and they do think obviously that this report will escalate that plan.

Lunden: Well, this is not a health issue- you're not going to die from this- it's a consumer issue- you want good quality.

Lyons: You're not getting what you pay for, that's the issue when you talk about bacteria...

Lunden: Get the fish down by the ice, right?

Lyons: You bet.

Lunden: Not up top. All right. Thanks a lot.

* * *



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A BUCKET 1/16/92

TRANSCRIPT

DATE January 16, 1992
TIME 5:30-6:30 AM
NETWORK ABC-TV
PROGRAM ABC World News This Morning

Mike Schneider, anchor:

Now, just when you thought it was safe to go in the water for your swim course, a word from Consumer Reports magazine on what you may be getting with your fish. ABC's Richard Davies has details.

Richard Davies reporting:

The catch of the day could be the catch of the week, or two weeks. Fifteen days is how long Consumer Reports says it may take seafood to get from the water to a processing plant and finally to your shopping cart. (Visual of fish in fishing vessel; processing plant; shopper selecting fish in supermarket)

The study found almost one third of the fish tested was spoiled with extremely high bacteria counts. And there may be problems with seafood that really is fresh. The waters where fish live are often dumping grounds for potentially harmful chemicals. The study's authors say pregnant women and children under four should avoid tuna, swordfish, and other seafood that may contain them.

Ned Groth (Consumers Union spokesman): For everyone else it's OK to eat it occasionally. The best strategy is to vary your choices in fish so that you don't eat too much of a species that accumulates mercury, PCBs, or pesticides.

Davies: The investigation also found that much of the fish wasn't kept clean enough or cold enough. At this fish processing plant in New Jersey a government inspector is on duty but he doesn't have to be here. Unlike poultry and beef there is no mandatory federal inspection of America's fish supply. Consumer Reports says less than a fifth of the fish we eat is government inspected. (Visual of fish processing plant; inspector sniffing fish)

Robert Cerullo (Wakefern Corporation spokesman): We participate in a voluntary inspection program which means that we have a full-time USDC government inspector on hand here to make sure that the facility meets or exceeds government standards. (Visual of inspector stamping fish packet with US Grade stamp Jan 14 1992)

Davies: But even if the processor gets it right the supermarket

-2-

may not. One third of the fish samples was mislabeled. (Visual of seafood section of supermarket) As Consumer Reports puts it in some cases the label had snapper but the testing lab said baloney. Richard Davies, ABC News, New York.

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**RADIO
TV REPORTS**6255 Sunset Blvd., Suite 1515
Los Angeles, CA 90028(213) 466-0124
FAX (213) 466-9815FOR BURSON MARSTELLAR
ATTN: MARTY GORDON

PROGRAM NEWS DAY

STATION CNN-TV

DATE JANUARY 16, 1992 6:08 AM

CITY LOS ANGELES

CONSUMER REPORTS' WARNING ABOUT FISH

ANNOUNCER: Many health conscious people are turning increasingly to sea food. It's high in protein, generally low in fat. But in today's Food and Health report, Eugenia Halsey says a magazine study has found some of the fish sold in grocery stores and markets spoiled or contaminated.

EUGENIA HALSEY REPORTING: (VOICE OVER FILM REPORT) Fish stores are awash with health conscious consumers, but a new study says the catch of the day might have been caught last week and can get less healthful.

During a six month investigation, CONSUMER REPORTS tested one hundred and thirteen samples of fin fish and shell fish in New York and Chicago stores. It found that almost one-third of the fish was spoiled, nearly half was contaminated with fecal bacteria, and some species were tainted with PCB's and mercury.

TRUDY LIEBERMAN, CONSUMER REPORTS: We think that the fish hadn't been handled properly, particularly at the retail level. The temperatures probably were too high all the way along the distribution chain and finally at the retail level.

HALSEY: The investigation also revealed that one third of the fish was mislabeled. In some cases, fish identified as fresh, was actually more than two weeks old or had been frozen. In other cases, inexpensive fish was passed off as "fancy" fish.

So - should you eat fish? CONSUMER REPORTS says, yes, but think twice before eating raw fish. Cook fish thoroughly. And if you're pregnant, avoid eating salmon, swordfish, lake whitefish and tuna since those fish contain PCBs or mercury that could hurt the fetus.

CONSUMER REPORTS' WARNING ABOUT FISH

-2-

The fish industry agrees on the need for better handling, storage temperatures and inspections, but takes issue with CONSUMER REPORTS' findings about spoilage. It says the presence of a lot of bacteria doesn't mean fish is unsafe.

LEE WEDDIG, NATIONAL FISHERIES INSTITUTE: There are plenty of bacteria out there, and if you follow good hygienic practices and cook your food and then judge the quality of the product with your own nose and how it tastes when you enjoy it, then you will be getting a good meal and you will know that you've got a safe product.

HALSEY: But consumer groups say, not always.

ELLEN HAAS, PUBLIC VOICE FOR FOOD AND HEALTH POLICY: You can't see the PCBs or the DDT residues that might be there. You can't see the vibio villnificus which can kill you.

HALSEY: The Food and Drug Administration says most fish is wholesome but the Agency is working with processors and retailers to strengthen voluntary inspection programs. Unlike meat and poultry, there is no mandatory federal inspection of fish.

HAAS: It's a cruel irony for consumers that such a healthy food has been treated so poorly and that the government is doing nothing about it.

HALSEY: However, consumer groups and the Fish industry agree the fish investigation may finally bait Congress into passing a mandatory seafood safety program.

Eugenia Halsey for CNN, Washington.

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NATIONAL REPORT

Study Finds Seafood Contamination

Chronicle Wire Services

New York — In a study of retail fish markets in New York City and Chicago, Consumers Union has found widespread contamination and mislabeling of seafood.

The study was based on 113 samples of fish and clams that were purchased in 40 randomly selected supermarkets and specialty fish shops. Thirty-four samples were spoiled, 50 were contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria and eight of 20 samples of swordfish had more than the permissible level of mercury. One-third of the samples were misidentified, usually as more expensive varieties.

"We clearly know we did not cover the whole waterfront," said Edward Groth, of Consumers Union. "We think the look we took is big enough and reliable enough to say there is a problem."

Unlike meat and poultry, the handling of fish is largely unregulated by the federal government. Consumer groups said the report bolsters their contention that mandatory seafood inspection is necessary. But the federal Food and Drug Administration called the findings overblown and said a case could not be made on such a small sampling in just two cities.

Spoiled fish is unlikely to make someone sick because thorough cooking kills the bacteria. However, raw or partly cooked fish may pose a greater risk than fish that is thoroughly cooked.

Plenty of Blame For Rap Stampede

\$10,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of the attackers. The victim's father said he will match that reward.

Quick Implant Decision Urged by Surgeons

Washington — Plastic surgeons asked the Food and Drug Administration yesterday to quickly convene a new panel of scientists to review safety information on silicone gel breast implants.

Officials of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, based in Chicago, said they have received a significant increase in calls from anxious women who have breast implants. To address their concerns, the group wants the FDA to announce a final decision on the use of breast implants by February 25.

Ten days ago, FDA Commissioner David Kessler asked physicians to stop inserting silicone gel breast implants until agency officials and an FDA advisory committee can evaluate new information on the devices.

Another Indictment For Charles Keating

Phoenix — Charles Keating Jr., whose failed Lincoln Savings and Loan epitomized the national thrift scandal, was indicted yesterday on federal charges of bankruptcy fraud, wire fraud and conspiracy.

Keating and fellow former American Continental Corp. executives Judy J. Wischer and Andrew F. Liggett are accused of fraudulently transferring \$975,000 of the company's money for their own use.

The indictment is the third against Keating, who was convicted last year on California securi-

- JOHAN, Gracia C.
- JUDGE, Thomas
- KEBLER, Lawrence R.
- KWAN, PAUL M.
- LESTER, Ronald V.
- LINDOW, Kenneth R., COLUBAF (rel.)
- LOH, Cheu Sung
- LOUHE, Allen
- MACHADO, John
- MACHADO, Sybil G.
- MARTIN, Abram V. ("Snake")
- MORO, Marie
- MURPHY, Dix Francis
- PALANGIAN, Vraj
- ROBERT, William K.
- RUFFINELLI, John
- TARSOUR, Mazouzen
- SCHUTT, Margaret Wurm
- SIEMER, Mabel Jones
- SOMMER, Carl
- SPENCER, Odella Ann
- TAMIR, Aida

of Barbara Williams and Dr. loved and respected friend of Jones and survived by a relatives and friends.

A Celebration of Life with City of Refuge Community, 14th St., San Francisco, CA January 14, 1992, at 1:00 P.M. Service will take place Friday, 1992, at 1:30 P.M. at Oak Hill under the direction of OAK HOME, 300 Gurnee Ave., S.

JONG, Gee Ben — Died at Ghin San Francisco, January 14, 1992, beloved mother of Walter, R. Bass, Peter, and Paul; mother of Jimmie Wong, Arthur Fong, C. H. and Chio-sunt of William Carol; godmother-in-law of grandmother of Kimberly, and Debra, Kenneth and Har; Peter, Lori, Leslie and Andy; Calvin, Lewis and Karen; W. Meis, Michael, and Kevin; son of Elvira and Patsy, and grandmother of 6; god-great-grandmother of 1.

Visitation, Saturday, 1992, at GREEN STREET MORTUARY, 649 Green St., SF. Funeral, Sunday, GREEN STREET MORTUARY, may be sent to Oakland.

ARMANINO, Rina — Of Colma, January 14, 1992; beloved wife of the late Guido E. Armanino; loving mother of Alma Morasco, and Joseph Armanino; dear mother-in-law of Betty Armanino; loving sister of Albert Chiapotti; dearest grandmother of Cathy Horn, Linda Gartner, Karen Wagner, Joey and Rory Armanino, Kelly Rolles, and Robin Johnson; also survived by 13 great-grandchildren; many nieces and nephews; aged 72 years; a member of the Golden Years Senior Citizens Club.

Friends may visit Thursday 1-4PM at DUGGAN'S SERRA MORTUARY, 300 Westlake Ave., O.C., and after 7:30PM at Holy Angels Church, 107 San Pedro Rd., Colma, where a Vigil Service will be held at 8PM, Funeral Mass, 10AM Friday at Holy Angels, inance to Italian Cemetery.

THE BUD DUGGAN FAMILY

BLOUNT, Lucy Ellen — in San Francisco, January 12, 1992.

Graveside services being held in Lexington, KY. Friends are invited to attend a memorial service Sunday, January 19, 1992 at 2:00 pm at 847 Walnut St., SF.

BOWEN, Maurann, Nurse Practitioner — in Oakland, January 14, 1992; beloved wife of Ralph "Danny"; loving mother of Catherine, Michael, and Robert; grandmother of Dylan Glover, Nicholas, Alexis, and Jamie Bowen.

Friends may attend the Memorial Service at St. Leo's Church, Piedmont Ave., Oakland at 6PM Friday, January 17, 1992. Donations may be made to Breast Cancer Action, P.O. Box 460185, San Francisco, CA 94145.

GRANT MILLER MORTUARY
2830 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland, CA
(510) 451-6434

BRATT, Frank Ellis — Died Jan. 14, 1992, in San Francisco; loving husband of Fumiko; devoted father to son Arfon and daughter Jennifer; survived by brothers Scott of Laguna Niguel and James of Orange Vale and parents, Russell and Marion Bratt of Vallejo, CA; Frank was born in Vallejo, CA, and attended Vallejo High School. Frank was an instructor at City College of San Francisco for 20 years and previously worked as a chef at the Canils Restaurant and at the Fairmont, St. Francis and Jack Tarr Hotels.

It was Frank's wish to be cremated and to have his ashes scattered at sea with no Memorial Service. Donations in Frank's name may be made to the Kaiser Hospital of S.F., 4131 Geary, S.F., CA 94118.

CASELLI, Joe — in Santa Rosa, January 14, 1992; Joe Caselli, devoted father of Mrs. Jo Ann Testa of Fairfax, Kathy Palast of Napa, Gail Kitching of Delaware, and Nancy Caselli of Walnut Creek; loving brother of John and Jerry Caselli, and Marie Colombini; dear grandfather of Vicki and Joe Testa, Kenny Palast, Ron and Nancy Kitching; a

JUDGE, Thomas — in Los Gatos 1992; son of J. Eugene & P. mother of Roxanne Judge; mother-in-law of Austin McCann; nephew of Mrs. Bill O'Malley; Mrs. Robert Forbes of El Cerrito; late Granam Judge Sr., for Jose, aged 39; a native of S. A Memorial Service will be held in Saratoga, Thursday, 1992 at 11am.

KEBLER, Lawrence A. — in this 1992; dear husband of D. also survived by other loving native of San Francisco; re: U.S. Immigration Service and Assoc. of California.

Friends are invited to attend Blessing Service Friday, CHAPEL OF ARTHUR J. SUL 2254 Market St., 9th 13th Committal at Holy Cross Cemetery. Flowers please.

LULLIVANS FUNERAL SERVICE

KWAN, PAUL M. — at rest in S January 7, 1992; beloved husband of Dora Kwan for 63 years; sign of Lily Wong Kwan; loving father of S. Philip S., and Patsy K. Chan Doris Yee, Pearl Jue, F. and Esther Ponticucci; father of Ian Kwan, David Chan, Thronston Jue, and Peter E. grandchild of 19; also surviving relatives; born in Canton 85 years.

Friends and relatives are invited to attend the services on Saturday, 1992 at 1:00 pm at the City Street Mortuary, 649 Green St. Friday, 7:00 pm. Informal memorial park.

GREEN STREET MORTUARY
FREE VALET PARK

LESTER, Ronald V. — Died Jan complications from AIDS; an associate with Genesis and a leader had been with Genesis since for the last seven years.

San Francisco Chronicle
Thursday January 16, 1992

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Alaska State Legislature

FROM: Kim Elton, ASMI Executive Director

DATE: January 15, 1992

RE: *Consumer Reports* Press Release and Article

The last 36 hours have been hectic but it is important to pause and outline what has happened and what we are doing about it.

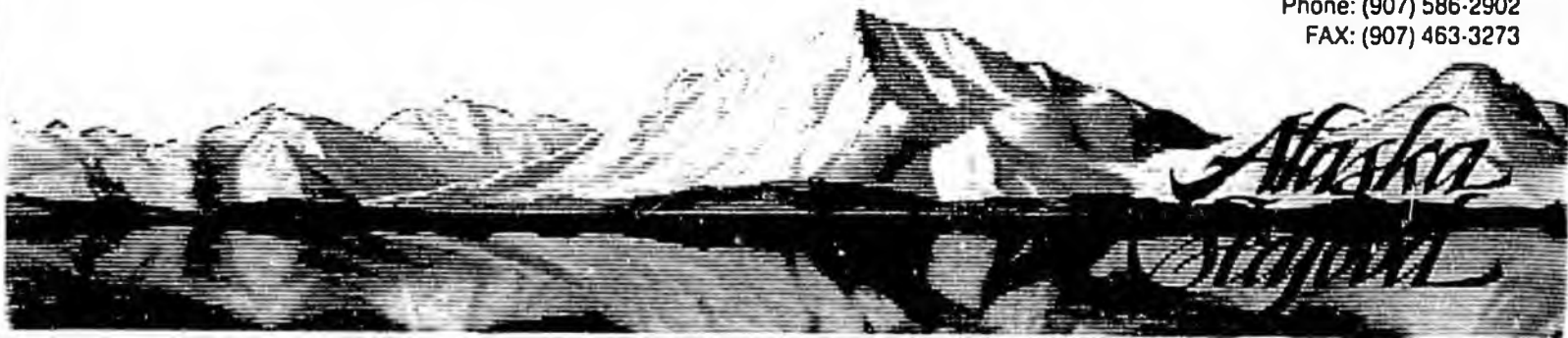
In a press release, *Consumer Reports* hypes an article scheduled for the February edition. That edition will hit the streets January 28. The press release was issued earlier this week and it is "embargoed" until Thursday morning (tomorrow) at 6 a.m. The press release has generated significant interest, including but not necessarily limited to, CNN, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Good Morning America. NFI is talking with them. The pertinent parts of the press release include:

- *" . . . PCBs--potential carcinogenic and reproductive hazards--were found in 43 percent of the salmon tested. . ."
- *"30 percent of the fish (not just salmon) tested. . . was spoiled."
- *"Pregnant women or women who expect to become pregnant should avoid eating salmon. . ."
- *"Most healthy adults should not "eat salmon, swordfish, or lake whitefish more than once a week."

We have also received a bootleg copy of the article scheduled to appear. The article is the featured article on the magazine cover. The cover includes a picture of fishermen unloading a net of fish on deck with the headline teaser "IS OUR FISH FIT TO EAT?"

The article focuses on fish handling practices--especially at the retail level. We have a poor quality fax of the article that cannot retransmit but do expect to get a better copy by Fed Ex--hopefully today. When we receive a copy, I will fax to all. While the entire article is extremely negative, the most pertinent part may be the discussion of PCBs.

Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute
1111 West 8th Street, Suite 100
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Phone: (907) 586-2902
FAX: (907) 463-3273



I've retyped the following paragraphs directly from the article. The quotes follow a discussion of the FDA setting the level for PCBs in fish at 2 parts per million.

"Given these facts, we think even 1 part per million of PCBs in fish is too high. Our laboratory detected levels ranging from 0.2 to 2.1 parts per million in our whitefish, swordfish, and salmon. Three out of ten samples of whitefish contained PCBs exceeding 1 part per million: three out of 20 samples of swordfish did.

"Seven of ten salmon samples we purchased in New York contained PCBs ranging from 0.7 to 1.3 parts per million. Thirty percent of the samples from Chicago had detectable levels, ranging from 0.2 to 0.8 parts per million.

"Some of our Chicago salmon samples were probably species from the west coast, at least that's what the store clerks told us. Those salmon may have come from less-contaminated waters than fish from the Atlantic or the Great Lakes, the possible sources of fish we purchased in New York. However, because the package labels, store clerks, and signs were not always believable, we could not tell for sure where our fish was from.

"Nor could we tell whether it was farm-raised as some salmon is. Just because salmon is farm-raised doesn't mean it is contaminant free. Farm-raised fish spend part of their time in pens in the ocean. Their diet also consists of manufactured feed, which is based largely on fish that may have contained PCBs."

Other than the last paragraph, there is no discussion of origin or species of salmon in the article and no discussion at all in the press release. In our discussions with the magazine (only at the functionary, not policy, level--they won't let anybody talk to anyone other than people in their PR department), they indicated that no distinction was made in the tests between species or point of origin. Magazine buyers apparently bought 20 salmon samples (10 in New York City and 10 in Chicago) in steak and fillet form. Based on this extremely small sample size and lack of data about species or origin, the sweeping indictment of salmon is totally irresponsible. FDA agrees and is preparing, according to their director of policy, attack quotes--especially on the outrageous statements about salmon.

On Tuesday, ASMI:

- initiated data collection from EPA and FDA on all tests of Pacific salmon;
- arranged to have Alaska salmon sampled for PCBs at a NMFS lab and independent lab;
- began working with Burson-Marsteller, the crisis public relations agency we used following the oil spill;
- contacted our Washington, D.C., counsel who arranged to have one of the partners with extensive experience with the apple\Alar and Chilean grape food contamination cases, and who has contacts at Consumer Reports, work with FDA and the surgeon general for supportive statements re: Alaska salmon and the lack of PCB point sources in the North Pacific;
- that counsel will also talk directly to *Consumer Reports* about the irresponsible reporting and determine how strong letter to follow should be written;

--met with state cabinet level officials from Fish and Game, Environmental Conservation, Commerce and Economic Development, and Health and Social Services about the dangers ahead, briefed the governor's office by memo and phone (face-to-face meeting in gov's office at 1:30 today);
--initiated a "talking point" paper to distribute to board, industry, congressional delegation, state agencies (we are revising now that we've got the article and will distribute when completed)--this will be developed into an "action" page for distribution to trade based on monitoring of the news stories by Burson-Marsteller and their advice; and
--worked with NFI on coordinated approach.

We will continue to keep you updated on the situation. If you have any additional questions or need more information, please feel free to contact Mary Gore on my staff.

Facts you should know about Alaska's salmon

- Experts from the FDA, EPA and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation have stated that there are no PCB problems with Alaska salmon.
- There is no indication that any of the estimated 20 salmon samples tested by *Consumer Reports* were wild Alaska salmon. All of the salmon was labeled "fresh" and purchased within the last six months, a time when very little salmon is commercially harvested in Alaska.
- Salmon is distinguished by species and point-of-origin. *Consumer Reports* completely ignored this fact, to the detriment of the Alaska seafood industry and the consumer, in their statement that 43% of salmon samples tested positive for PCBs. The consumer is hurt because the info is misleading and incomplete.
- These are serious allegations and the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) is doing everything in its power to get *Consumer Reports* to clarify the data. At this time, *Consumer Reports* has not been forthcoming with any additional information regarding their testing.
- The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute has submitted wild Alaska salmon for PCB testing to both a federal agency and an independent research firm.
- 20 salmon samples taken from two markets, with no species identification or point-of-origin information, does not approach an acceptable amount of data from which one can issue such a sweeping indictment.
- Since its inception more than 10 years ago, ASMI's Seafood Quality Assurance Program has helped ensure the proper handling of Alaska seafood products through the distribution of educational and technical information to fishermen, processors, cold storage operators, distributors, foodservice and retailers. By way of these materials, videos and learning aids, serious efforts are made to educate each of the critical links in the distribution chain about how to maintain the quality of Alaska seafood on its way to the consumer.
- To ensure Alaska seafood is wholesome and safe, the Alaska DEC has a year-round seafood inspection program. Alaska inspectors examine seafood for contamination and decomposition and monitor distribution operations within Alaska. State inspectors visit processing plants to make sure they are run according to an approved plan of operation, that equipment is running properly, and seafood is handled appropriately.
- Alaska has the most pristine waters in the world, according to research by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA). Analysis of strategic sample sites conducted by NOAA, such as the "National Benthic Surveillance Project: West Coast," shows Alaska's fishing grounds are located in waters free of pollutants.

For more information write the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute at
1111 West 8th Street, Suite 100, Juneau, Alaska 99801-1895,
call (907) 586-2902, or FAX (907) 463-3273.

TALK PAPER

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service 5600 Fishers Lane Rockville, Maryland 30857

FDA Talk Papers are prepared by the Press Office to guide FDA personnel in responding with consistency and accuracy to questions from the public on subjects of current interest. Talk Papers are subject to change as more information becomes available. Talk Papers are not intended for general distribution outside FDA, but all information in them is public, and full texts are releasable upon request.

T92-3
Jan. 16, 1992

Chris Lacos
(202) 245-1144

FDA's Seafood Safety Program

FDA has been receiving inquiries about the safety, quality and labeling of seafood, as a result of the announcement of articles on the subject in February's Consumer Reports magazine.

The following can be used to answer public inquiries:

* { While we agree with Consumers Union, which publishes the magazine, that there is room for improvement in the handling, labeling and sale of seafood at retail, we believe, as a 1991 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report concluded, that the overwhelming preponderance of seafood, as sold, is safe to eat. FDA believes that Consumers Union's warnings to consumers not to eat certain species are unfounded, particularly when based on just 113 seafood samples, as stated in the article.

FDA agrees that consumers should eat a variety of foods, including seafood, and avoid eating excessive amounts of any particular food item. Consumers should also heed state advisories that address local contaminant problems.

Fish and shellfish can be an important part of a healthy diet, but they also are highly perishable products that can spoil or lose quality at any point from harvesting to consumption. Like other flesh foods, fish and

Page 2, T82-3, Seafood Safety

shellfish begin to decompose as soon as they are harvested. Preservation methods can slow the process but not arrest it entirely. For the most part, however, the degree of decomposition found on seafood being sold affects its marketability, smell and taste, but not its safety.

Consumer Reports is correct in stating that, by the time most seafood reaches retail, it is nearing the end of its normally brief shelf life. Consumers should examine seafood before purchasing it and consume it shortly thereafter.

There are some 3,852 processing plants, 1,830 wholesale plants and 300,000 retail seafood outlets in the United States. FDA administers a \$40 million program to inspect seafood processing and wholesale plants and train state inspectors to ensure safety and quality of seafood at the retail level. The budget for this longstanding program was increased 60 percent in the past year.

The agency has endorsed and is responding to recommendations NAS made for strengthening government regulation and enforcement, particularly to encourage the use of a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan to assure seafood safety and quality. The HACCP plan identifies the critical points at which problems are most likely to occur, and concentrates preventive efforts there.

The Consumer Reports article focuses on problems resulting from poor sanitation and fish handling practices at the retail level. These are problems being addressed by FDA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) through a pilot HACCP program started last October in retail stores. Twenty-five supermarkets operated by 13 chains in 12 states are participating. The program calls for each participant to put into practice a HACCP plan that is designed to ensure that seafood products being offered for sale are safe.

-MORE-

Page 4, T92-3, Seafood Safety

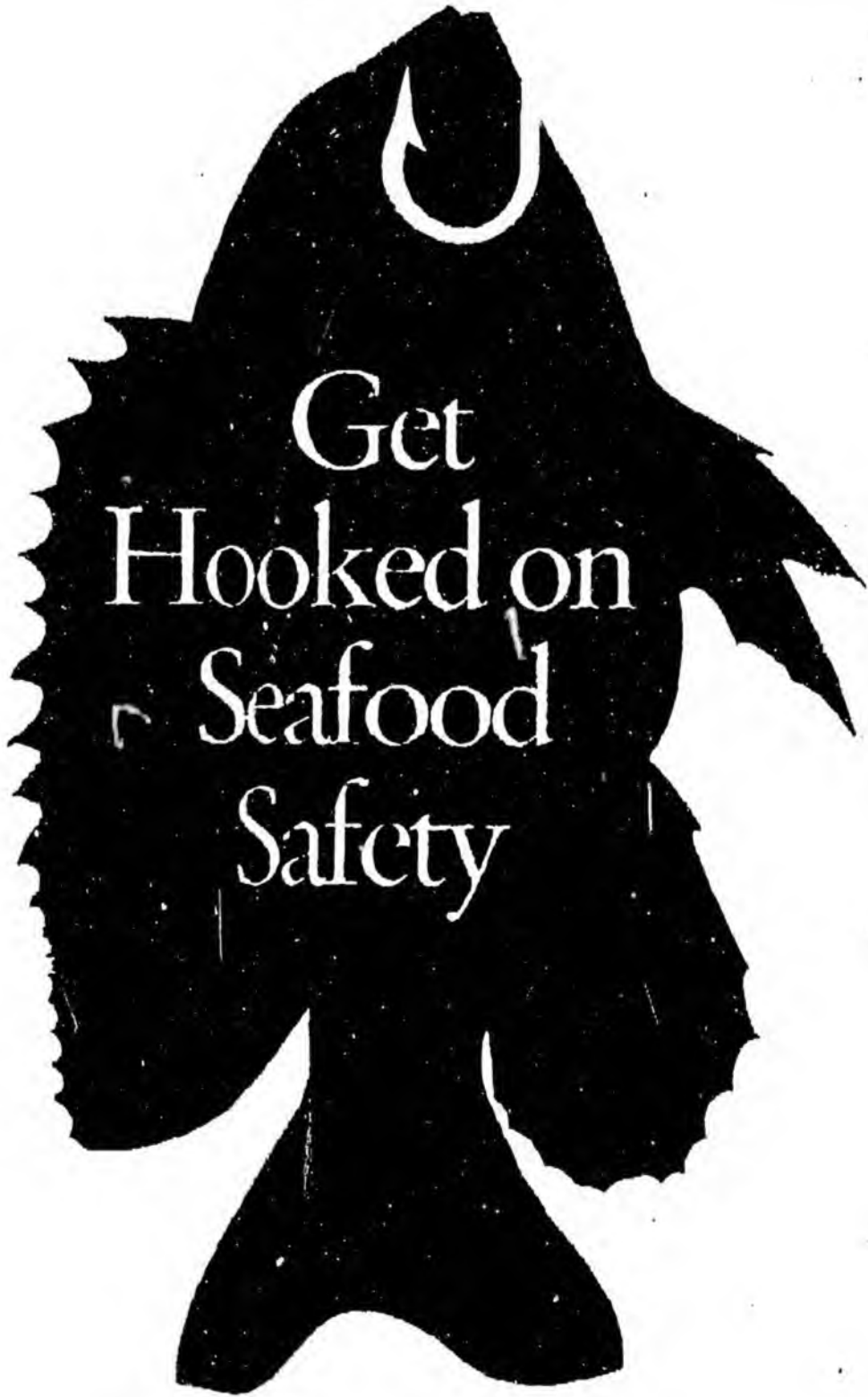
percent of the seafood consumed in the United States is imported. Samples to be analyzed are selected carefully from countries with a history of problems so as to be most likely to catch any violations.

Among the special projects completed last year was FDA's analysis of 220 cans of domestic and imported tuna for methyl mercury. All of the samples were below the FDA's action level of 1 part per million. The 220 samples averaged 0.17 ppm. Fifty samples showed only trace or undetectable levels, and 39 others had less than 0.10 ppm.

FDA's increased emphasis on enforcement has resulted in more than 50 recalls of adulterated seafood products and 23 actions against firms for misbranding during fiscal years 1990 and 1991. The adulteration problems were principally microbiological--problems that cannot be detected by visual inspection alone. The misbranding cases ranged from undeclared ingredients to unsupported health claims and the illegal substitution of a cheaper species of fish for a more costly one. Since the start of fiscal year 1992 on Oct. 1, 1991, FDA has issued 16 warning letters to the seafood industry, 11 for misbranding and 5 for adulteration.

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(For further information, see FDA Backgrounder on Seafood Safety, May 1991, FDA press release P091-10, March 28, 1991; and FDA Talk Paper, T91-11, March 7, 1991).



by Roger W. Miller

What food is nutritious, wholesome, tender, easy to digest, and yet subject to a bad press? The answer: seafood.

Yes, despite its growing popularity in a country in which counting cholesterol has become almost as important as counting calories, seafood has often been pictured in the media as unsafe. Last year, for example, editorial writers for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Atlanta Constitution*, and the *Dallas Morning News* all quoted statistics claiming that eating fish was 25 times more likely to make you ill than dining on beef and 16 times more likely than downing poultry or pork. Both CBS TV's "This Morning" program and TV station WABC in New York City repeated those statistics in features on fish safety.

The editorial writers and the TV producers also called for new legislation to provide more government inspection of fish so that we'd be better able to keep down our seafood.

All of which caused then Acting FDA Commissioner James S. Benson to tell the *New York Times* in a letter to the editor: "You have been severely misled."

Supporting Benson was a report last January from the National Academy of Sciences. Completing a two-year study of seafood safety, the academy concluded: "Most seafoods available to the U.S. public are wholesome and unlikely to cause illness in the consumer."

The statistics used by the editorial writers applied to "outbreaks" of illnesses reported to the national Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, the federal agency responsible for collecting and analyzing health statistics. (An outbreak is two or more illnesses linked to a common source.) The news people failed to pick up the distinction between outbreaks and illnesses, and failed to appreciate that CDC only tabulated those incidents reported voluntarily by state and local health authorities. These authorities tend to report only major incidents, such as outbreaks involving two or more people.

To get a truer picture of the safety of seafood, FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, in cooperation with CDC, did a risk assessment study. It showed about one illness per million servings for seafood when raw or partially cooked molluscan shellfish (mussels, scallops, clams and oyster) were excluded from the calculations. (In comparison, the risk assessment for chicken is about one

illness for every 25,000 servings.)

Beware Raw Mollusks

Now add raw mollusks to the statistical stew and, as Hamlet said: "Ay, there's the rub." According to the FDA risk assessment, the chance of illness for seafood overall with the raw shellfish jumps to something like 1 in 250,000 servings. That's still 10 times safer than eating chicken, but the agency figures that those raw oysters, clams and mussels—so savored by gourmets—account for a whopping 85 percent of all the illnesses caused by eating seafood.

Mollusks are troublemakers because most cannot move and have to feed by filtering water through their systems, pulling out nutrients in the process. In so doing, they also can pick up and store harmful bacteria and viruses that can cause a string of illnesses. When people eat these pathogen-packed shellfish raw they ingest the viruses and bacteria.

Or, as Anthony Guarino, director of FDA's fishery research branch on Dauphin Island, Ala., asks: "What other animal do we eat, digestive tract and all, without cooking it first?"

These mollusks have long been consumed raw by humans, and no doubt they have made people ill throughout history. However, the threat they pose today may be greater because of increased pollution of the waters in which they live. Mollusks are usually found in estuaries, which is where rivers and seas meet. And estuaries these days are more likely to be closer to cities and thus more apt to be polluted than offshore waters.

FDA's risk assessment study concluded that 1 out of every 1,000 to 2,000 servings of raw mollusks is likely to make someone ill. For that reason, these shelled creatures could stand a little more press attention. Not enough people realize the danger in eating them uncooked, particularly when they are taken from contaminated warmer waters or held and shipped without adequate refrigeration. The warmer the temperature, the quicker the bacteria multiply.

Two states—Louisiana and California—now require warning notices about eating raw shellfish at places where they are sold. In Louisiana, the following notice is required:

WARNING

Raw oysters, raw clams, and raw mussels can cause serious illness in persons with

liver, stomach, blood or immune disorders.

The California notice requires a similar tag on the sack or container of oysters from the Gulf of Mexico. The message is much the same. That state specifies that retail establishments must display the notice in signs, menu warnings, table tents, or "other visible warnings at point of sale . . ."

Oysters taken from the Gulf of Mexico, particularly from March through October, may contain a naturally occurring pathogen called *Vibrio vulnificus*, which is particularly pernicious to persons with liver disease, such as heavy drinkers. Cancer patients, people with iron metabolism disorders, and those with weakened immune systems (such as AIDS victims) may also be vulnerable. The risks are high. The fatality rate for at-risk individuals who become infected is more than 50 percent, with death usually occurring within two days.

(For more on *Vibrio vulnificus*, see "Fewer Months 'R' Safe for Eating Raw Gulf Oysters" in the June 1988 *FDA Consumer*.)

While raw or undercooked shellfish continues to pose problems, the fact that, overall, seafood is a safe and nutritious part of the diet means that it's likely Americans will continue to put more seafood on their forks in the coming years. Indeed, the National Fisheries Institute, a trade organization, has set a goal of 20 pounds per citizen by the year 2000. Seafood consumption in 1989 was figured at 13.9 pounds per person, not including recreationally caught fish (which adds another 3 to 4 pounds per person). That was an increase in consumption of commercially caught fish of 25 percent since 1980. These increases occurred while beef and pork consumption declined (poultry eating also gained). All of which probably reflects health concerns of consumers.

FDA Steps Up Programs

Reflecting this growing preference for fish, FDA has stepped up its programs to ensure the safety of seafood. Last March, the Office of Seafood was created within the agency's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition to strengthen the agency's domestic and imported seafood programs. The office will reinforce the agency's mandate to conduct enforcement, research, educational, and training activities on seafood. Creation of the new office was announced in a *Federal Register* notice published Feb. 26, 1991. Na-



FDA Inspector Al Carreras checks the temperature of clams being trucked in a seafood warehouse in Baltimore, Md.

nationwide, FDA presently has some 300 people engaged in various seafood safety programs. An additional 270 scientific and inspectional staff positions will be added to the program over the next two years. Congress has authorized approximately \$9.5 million for 122 new positions for seafood programs in the current fiscal year, and FDA has requested another \$15 million for 150 more positions for the 1992 fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

The responsibilities of the new Office of Seafood include:

- overseeing seafood inspection programs undertaken by FDA in cooperation with other federal and state agencies
- researching and testing methods to detect and evaluate the effects of chemical and microbial contaminants that may present public health hazards in fish caught in the ocean and coastal waters, and in seafood products developed through aquaculture
- developing methods to identify economic fraud
- administering the National Shellfish Sanitation Program, which works to maintain the safety of shellfish
- evaluating the effectiveness of the agency's seafood initiatives
- participating in programs to increase industry awareness of FDA seafood regula-

tions and enforcement programs • overseeing the development of training programs in seafood safety for FDA, state and local inspectors. This would result, in part, in upping the number of FDA shellfish specialists from 12 to more than 50.

Together with the states, FDA is developing a program to more comprehensively monitor waters from which fish and shellfish are taken, and, in March, FDA announced that it had launched a special inspection of the nation's seafood processing plants and other seafood establishments and has begun the first of several pilot programs aimed at further ensuring the safety and quality of seafood through surveillance from ship to final sale.

FDA plans to complete its special inspection of all seafood establishments listed with the agency within the year to get a picture of the state of current seafood handling and any new or generalized problems in the various parts of the industry.

The new pilot program is a cooperative effort with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) of the Department of Commerce. It applies the techniques of identifying and controlling critical processing points (a system called Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point methods), which FDA has already applied with great

success to the canning industry.

FDA also is strengthening its work with the coastal states and NMFS, aimed at making criminal cases against "shellfish bootleggers," who harvest and sell shellfish illegally from contaminated waters.

In announcing the inspection program, Assistant Secretary for Health James O. Mason, M.D., explained, "These new programs do not mean that fish are not safe food. What these new programs do mean is that FDA is enhancing its seafood inspection program to keep up with this increasingly important part of the American diet."

Mason said the Institute of Medicine backed the kind of regulation FDA and NMFS are trying in their pilot program with eight seafood processors—with representative facilities producing fin fish, crab, surimi (fish processed to taste like lobster or other shellfish), and other specialty products.

In these plants, what are known as "critical control points" have been identified. These are points in the process where problems can arise. The firms will monitor and record data at each of these points for review and inspection.

Mason said participating firms will eventually have a special seal with which to label their products—and it will be up to consumers to demand the new system when they buy.

Pilot projects are also planned soon to bring Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point principles to shellfish, as well as imports and retail operations.

The stepped-up programs also include more oversight of imported fish products (more than half of the fish Americans consume is imported) and of the fast-growing aquaculture industry. (Some 360 million pounds of catfish alone were grown on U.S. "fish farms" in 1990.)

Other Seafood Sicknesses

In addition to molluscan shellfish, the other popular raw fish dish, sushi, may also present dangers to the diner. Larvae of parasites—including roundworms, tapeworms, flukes, and flatworms—can end up in the meat of fish. Symptoms are usually mild and temporary, but in a few cases severe abdominal pain can result. If you want to eat sushi, find out if the fish was previously frozen, as freezing kills the larvae. Consumers should not prepare sushi at home.

More common among the seafood maladies are illnesses traced to the Norwalk



Amy Watkins buys marlin and mahi-mahi from Danye Hahn, manager of a seafood market in Baltimore, Md.

virus and the naturally occurring scombroid and ciguatera poisonings. While *Vibrio vulnificus* is the No. 1 killer among seafood pathogens in immune-compromised individuals, the Norwalk virus causes most illnesses that result from eating molluscan shellfish.

Gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines) is the characteristic symptom of the Norwalk virus infection. The virus comes from fecal contamination of waters where the mollusks live. Those polluted waters are the ones that authorities try to detect and close down to harvesters. However, some water men may work the areas anyway and offer their "bootlegged" products to the public.

Human sewage can also contain bacteria that cause cholera and other illnesses, and mollusks can pick up those microbes. While cholera has been all but wiped out in waters around more developed countries, it is almost a constant in some Third World areas and has been a particular problem for some South American countries this year.

Yet another legacy of untreated sewage that finds its way into shellfish is the virus that causes hepatitis A. The symptoms are relatively mild, but some people can be left with severe liver damage.

Two other diseases that can result from consuming shellfish—even if well cooked—are paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) and neurotoxic shellfish poisoning (NSP). Both are caused by naturally occurring toxins. PSP can be fatal but both it and NSP are extremely rare, thanks to excellent monitoring programs. Symptoms can appear within 30 minutes of ingestion; they include tingling, numbness or burning sensations in the lips, gums, tongue, and face. NSP is similar to PSP but milder. Symptoms include tingling in the extremities, vomiting and diarrhea.

Both NSP and PSP occur in humans after they've eaten mollusks that have fed in so-called "bloomed" waters. These blooms, more commonly known as "red tides," contain plankton (dinoflagellates) in such numbers as to discolor the water. The plankton aren't toxic to the shellfish, but may be dangerous to humans. Not all "blooms" contain toxic dinoflagellates, but when they do the shellfish may be carrying the plankton several days before the water changes color.

A few species of fin fish can also be the cause of illness even if thoroughly cooked. Dinoflagellates can also cause ciguatera poisoning, although the plankton doesn't need to be present in such num-

bers as to add hues to the water. Found mostly in warmer waters, the toxic plankton moves up the food chain to predatory reef fish, notably groupers, snappers, barracuda, and Spanish mackerel. Ciguatera causes an estimated 30 percent of all fin fish-borne food poisonings in the United States, some 3,000 cases annually. Most cases occur in Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Many cases occur when sports fishermen sell their catch to restaurants; commercial fishermen avoid such reefs.

Symptoms are called "moderately severe," affecting both the gastrointestinal and neurological systems. The symptoms, which can occur almost immediately, include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, chills, and sweating.

FDA hopes to test a kit that could detect ciguatera contamination this year.

Scombroid poisoning is usually associated with tuna, bluefish and mahi-mahi (dolphin fish). These fish naturally contain high levels of histamine, which is released as the fish decompose. The disease runs its course, and the usually mild symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, and tingling and burning sensations around the mouth.

Sports Fishing

Ciguatera and scombroid poisonings point up another area of concern for health officials—recreational fishing. It's estimated that people casting lines in water and digging clams along the seashore may add 3 to 4 pounds to the nearly 16 pounds of seafood that each American, on average, consumes each year. The reef fish associated with ciguatera are prized by sport fishers, as are the scombroid-susceptible bluefish and, to a lesser extent, tuna.

State health officials often issue advisories to warn anglers of the poisoning possibilities in the fish they catch and to caution them against trying to sell such disease-prone fish to vendors or the public.

Sport fishers also need to be careful about doing their thing in waters contaminated by chemicals and metals. These contaminants may include pesticides (such as DDT and dioxin), mercury, and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). The latter were widely used in the past as insulators in transformers and were generously dumped into any convenient body of water after use.

Mercury (or, more correctly, the form known as methylmercury) and PCBs are the main pollution problems. Both can

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The Eyes Have It

You literally have to look a fish in the eye to tell whether it's fresh. The eyes should be clear and bulge a little. Only a few fish, such as walleye pike, have naturally cloudy eyes.

Look for firm and shiny flesh in either whole fish or fillets. Press the fish with a finger, and if it leaves an indentation, it's not the freshest. Dull flesh may also mean that the fish is old.

Make certain there is no darkening around the edges of the fish or brown or yellowish discoloration, especially if these areas appear dry and mushy.

If you're still uncertain about how fresh the fish is, ask to have it rinsed under cold water and then smell it. Fresh fish should have no fishy or ammonia smell.

The shells of hard clams, mussels or oysters should be closed, or should close when their shells are tapped. The necks of steamer clams should twitch when their shells are tapped. Crabs should

move when touched. Lobsters' tails should curl under their bodies when (carefully) picked up.

When buying frozen fish, select packages that are not open, torn, or crushed on the edges. Avoid packages that are above the frost line in the store's freezer.

If the package has a transparent cover, look for signs of frost or ice crystals, for the crystals could mean that the fish has either been stored for a long period or

thawed and refrozen. Nor should there be evidence of drying out, such as white or dark spots, discoloration, or fading of red or pink flesh.

One other point: Don't buy cooked seafood such as shrimp, crabs or smoked fish if they're displayed in the same case as raw fish. They're good candidates for cross-contamination—and a bellyache.

—R.M.



cause birth defects, and both have been the subject of numerous advisories to anglers. (Swordfish are particularly known for accumulating methylmercury, and consumption of that fish as a regular habit may not be advisable for women who are pregnant or likely to become pregnant.)

In its recent report, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that "only a small portion of seafood is contaminated with appreciable concentrations..." of chemicals. But the academy cautioned that the area had not been studied well enough, and it called for better efforts to alert fishermen and the rest of the public about contaminated waters.

What Consumers Can Do

While FDA is working to ensure that the seafood sold to the public is safe, consumers themselves can do a lot to make sure that their seafood doesn't cause illness. Indeed, it is estimated that as much as half of all seafood problems could be eliminated by better handling and prepara-

tion in the home and in restaurants and other food service establishments. Two accompanying articles give tips on how to select and store seafood.

As to seafood preparation, the household chef can't go wrong by following good sanitation practices, such as washing hands thoroughly before starting to prepare a meal and after handling foods—such as meat and fish—that contain bacteria, keeping equipment such as knives and cutting boards clean, and keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold. (For more on safe food preparation, see "The Unwelcome Dinner Guest: Preventing Food-Borne Illness" in the January-February 1991 *FDA Consumer*.)

Sufficient cooking is most important of all when it comes to seafood safety. Fish is done when it is no longer translucent, when it flakes easily with a fork. Oysters and clams should be placed in boiling water, and then cooked for four to six minutes after the water begins to boil again, or steamed for six to eight minutes. Virtually

all bacteria and other harmful agents will be killed with proper cooking.

Seafood lovers who can't live without raw shellfish would be wise to limit their consumption to the cold weather months, when the mollusks are less likely to be carrying disease-causing organisms. Always buy from a reputable dealer. Roadside stands that offer low prices may be offering "bootleg" shellfish—that is, shellfish taken from off-limit (polluted) waters. Shellfish shippers have to meet federal standards and are certified by state shellfish control authorities.

So what's the bottom line on eating seafood? For the most part, seafood is wholesome, nutritious, easy to prepare and digest, best eaten when fully cooked—and safe.

Roger W. Miller is a writer in Chevy Chase, Md., and a former editor of *FDA Consumer*.

The Nose Knows

Ben Franklin said that "fish and house guests begin to smell after three days." He should have said two days, at least for fish, for it's unwise to keep unfrozen fish for more than two days. In fact, fresh fish that is subject to scombroid poisoning, such as tuna, bluefish and mahi-mahi, should be used within 24 hours of purchase.

Some other points that Ben may not have mentioned:

- Refrigerate fish at home as soon as possible and keep the fish at 32 to 37 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Before refrigerating, remove the fish from its package, rinse under cold water, and pat dry with paper towels. To keep cleaned fish more than 24 hours, place the fish on a cake rack in a pan, fill the pan with crushed ice, and cover tightly with plastic wrap or foil. Rinse the fish daily, cleaning the rack and changing the ice.
- Throw out fish with a strong fishy or ammonia smell.
- If you intend to keep the fish more than



- two days, freeze it immediately after it's been caught or purchased. Rinse it under cold water and pat very dry with paper towels. Wrap tightly in plastic and then in aluminum foil before putting it in the freezer. Plan on using the fish as soon as possible for best quality.
- Always thaw frozen fish and seafood in the refrigerator.
- Store live oysters, clams and mussels in the refrigerator. Keep damp by covering with a clean, damp cloth or moist paper towel, but do not place on ice or allow fresh water to come in contact with them. Never place in an airtight container because it will kill them.

- Keep freshly shucked oysters, scallops or clams in their shells and store in the coldest part of the refrigerator, preferably surrounding the package with ice.
- Store live lobsters and crabs in the refrigerator in moist packages (use seaweed or damp paper strips), but not in airtight containers, fresh water, or salt water. Lobsters should remain alive for about 24 hours.
- Take towels and washcloths away from house guests after two days. Maybe they'll get the hint.

—R.M.



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We hope you found this reprint from FDA Consumer magazine useful and informative. FDA Consumer, the magazine of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, provides a wealth of information on FDA-related health issues: food safety, nutrition, drugs, medical devices, cosmetics, radiation protection, vaccines, blood products, and veterinary medicine. For a sample copy of FDA Consumer and a subscription order form, write to: Food and Drug Administration, HFI-40, Rockville, Md. 20857.

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January 16, 1992

STATEMENT FOR THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HEARING, JAN. 16, 1992
CONSUMER REPORTS ARTICLE & RELATED MEDIA COVERAGE ON FISH SAFETY
BY JOHN A. SANDOR, COMMISSIONER, DEPT. OF ENVIRON. CONSERVATION

Mr. Chairman, Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this very important subject.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is working closely with the Department of Commerce & Economic Development (DC&ED), Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the Department of Health and Social Services (H&SS) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and others to minimize the adverse effects from this inaccurate and unfortunate story.

Specialists from the above agencies agree there are no (polychlorinated biphenyls) PCB problems with Alaska salmon.

The Alaska Seafood Inspection program is regarded as the best in the United States. To ensure Alaska seafood is wholesome and safe, Alaska has a year-round seafood inspection program. Alaska inspectors examine seafood for contamination and decomposition and monitors distribution operations within Alaska. State inspectors visit processing plants to make sure they are run according to an approved plan of operation, that equipment is running properly, and seafood is handled appropriately. In addition, our staff works very closely with the FDA, NMFS and other organizations on special situations which arise to be certain our actions are effectively coordinated. For example, in the special processing and shipment of surplus salmon from Prince William Sound to the Soviet Union last year, DEC seafood inspection personnel were on line in Prince William Sound assuring the processing was in accord with standards.

Kit Ballentine, who heads our Environmental Health Division and Manny Soares, Chief of our Seafood Section are in Seattle working with the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Food and Drug Administration and others on this and related issues.

Accompanying this statement is a brief summary of the Alaska Seafood Inspection Program.

We would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

SEAFOOD INSPECTION PROGRAM

The Seafood Program consists of a Program Manager and his staff of 5; a Seafood Permit Coordinator, Shellfish Coordinator, Cannery Specialist and a Field Supervisor who supervises 11 field inspectors throughout the State at 7 locations listed below:

Kodiak - 2 inspectors
King Salmon - 1 inspector
Anchorage - 2 inspectors
Cordova - 1 inspector
Ketchikan - 2 inspectors
Dutch Harbor - 2 inspectors
Soldotna - 1 inspector

Additionally, Environmental Health Staff are crossed utilized in an effort to increase statewide coverage where Seafood staff is not immediately available.

Inspections are conducted on minimum schedule which is in direct relation to PUBLIC HEALTH RISK! An example of this would be as follows:

Canned or Smoked Salmon are at a higher risk of contamination due to increased handling and processing. Cold or frozen fish are at a lesser risk.

The following numbers represent the total number of Seafood Inspections conducted annually.

1988 - 948 inspections
1989 - 782 inspections
1990 - 710 inspections
1991 - 1418 inspections

Through the efforts of the Seafood Program, Voluntary Destructions have been reduced in 1991 by more than half. Improved handling of fish products, quality inspections and improved training have helped increase the credibility of Alaska Seafood Products.