

Iowa Food Protection Rapid Response Team

Background: Increasing risks to our nation's food safety system in recent years has led to expanded efforts toward ensuring food safety in our country at all levels. These efforts include several current initiatives, one of which is the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Protection Rapid Response Team (RRT) program. The program began in 2008 and 2009 with the funding of 9 RRT pilot states, including the nearby states of Minnesota and Michigan. These states were charged with strengthening food safety infrastructure and developing capabilities for rapid response to all types of food and feed emergencies.

In 2012, the FDA again announced a funding opportunity for 10 additional states to implement a Food Protection RRT through a 3-year cooperative agreement. In September 2012, the state of Iowa was notified as being a recipient of one of these awards.

Iowa Rapid Response Team Goals and Structure

The goals of the Iowa RRT are to improve the proficiency of food and feed emergency response and to increase communication and collaboration between federal, state and local response partners. We anticipate local health departments and local food contracting agencies will also be included in the Food and Feed Rapid Response Team initiatives through training and exercise opportunities. The team consists of the following:

- **Coordinating Council**
 - Advisory group to core members consisting of existing staff
 - Represent key stakeholders including but not limited to the following entities:
 - Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA)
 - Food and Consumer Safety Bureau
 - Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)
 - Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
 - Bureau of Environmental Health Services (EHS)
 - Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS)
 - Feed & Fertilizer Bureau
 - Dairy Products Control Bureau
 - Meat & Poultry Inspection Bureau
 - Laboratory Bureau
 - State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) at the University of Iowa
- **Core Member Group** (3 individuals)
 - (1) RRT Coordinator – Kristen Obbink, DVM, MPH (housed by DIA)
 - Responsibilities:
 - Coordinate foodborne illness response efforts through collaboration with other involved agencies at the state and local levels
 - Perform/assist with intake and tracking of foodborne illness complaints and environmental investigation follow-up efforts
 - Assign investigatory responsibility to environmental specialists and others during incidents/investigations, as needed
 - Coordinate development and implementation of rapid response food and feed policies and procedures
 - Will serve as the DIA's primary contact for all foodborne illness complaints and environmental investigation follow-up throughout the state

- (2) Public Health Liaison – Nilani Downs, MPH (housed by IDPH)
 - Responsibilities:
 - Serve as the IDPH liaison to the RRT doing the following:
 - Developing policies and procedures related to foodborne illness surveillance and investigation.
 - Planning, developing, delivering, and participating in training and exercises on foodborne illness investigation and response.
 - Serving as the RRT public health lead for foodborne illness outbreaks.
 - Coordinate the collection of and analyze establishment complaint data.

- (3) IDALS Liaison – Neal Vaughn, Fertilizer Administrator, Commercial Feed & Fertilizer Bureau (housed by IDALS)
 - Responsibilities:
 - Assist with feed emergency response and investigations as well as issues with IDALS-regulated products.
 - Represent all bureaus within IDALS during rapid response efforts.

If you have any questions regarding the new Iowa RRT and how it may impact you, please don't hesitate to contact Kristen at 515-281-6096 or kristen.obbink@dia.iowa.gov. We look forward to working with all of you to improve foodborne illness response throughout the state!

Contact information for each of the RRT core members is listed below:

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