It was thought that bacteria could not grow inside an egg and if we washed the shells we destroyed any bacteria.

Research of Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) came as a shock and caused opinions to change.

In 1988 Dr. St. Louis and colleagues wrote a report on SE in the Journal of the American Medical Association (and) said SE could be found in intact eggs and grow.
In 1992 USDA receives funding to establish the S.E. Pilot Project in Pennsylvania.

Purpose was to study related on-farm factors associated with contamination of eggs with S.E.

In 1994 Pennsylvania launched the Pennsylvania Egg Quality Assurance Program (PEQAP)

Soon thereafter several states and United Egg Producers (UEP) developed programs similar to PA.
After implementing on-farm programs along with on-farm and transport refrigeration, we thought we had found a way to eliminate SE.

We thought this along with education of consumers and chefs about refrigeration and cooking temperatures had solved the problem.

We still believe that refrigeration will retard any growth and proper cooking temperatures will kill the bacteria. – But that wasn’t enough.
Timeline

- 2004 – FDA announces plans for proposed legislation to address S.E.
- July 2010 – FDA Egg Safety Rule becomes effective for implementation of all farms with 50,000 or more birds.
- July 2012 – FDA Egg Safety Rule must be implemented by all farms with more than 3,000 birds.
Egg Safety Rule Requirements

- Testing to verify effectiveness in:
  1. Chick procurement
  2. Biosecurity
  3. Cleaning and Disinfection
  4. Rodent and Fly Control
  5. Refrigeration

- Lots of paperwork and record keeping.
Environmental & Egg Testing

- Rule requires environmental testing of the equipment and manure in pullet (growing houses) and layer houses.

- If environmental swabs are found to be positive then a series of 4 egg test are requirement. While not required, UEP recommends that eggs be taken off the market while egg testing is conducted.

- If eggs are positive then eggs must be diverted to pasteurization until egg test are negative for SE.
Producers are required to conduct three environmental tests during the growing and layer period. This plus, in some cases, the need for egg testing have proven to be very costly.

In some cases, FDA has requested private business information, which has not been well received by the producers.

Upon finding an environmental positive, some producers have depopulated their flock.

Taking eggs off the market and or disposing of the flock has caused unexpected disruptions in the egg supply.
FDA on the Farm

- During 2011, FDA conducted inspections of more than 400 egg farms.
- Verify that the farm is meeting the Rule and has an SE prevention plan in place.
- Reviewing all company records under the SE Rule requirement.
- Taking environmental swabs on some farms.
FDA Test Results

- Of the more than 400 farm inspections and 2,056 environmental samples taken, FDA found:
  - 2.5% of the samples tested positive for SE.
  - All SE positives came from only 10 farms.
  - Overall – lots of inspections and few environmental SE positives.
In 2010 there were reported to be 3 human illness outbreaks from 3 small restaurants and caterers with initial reports of approximately 300 illnesses.

The tracback led to an Iowa farm. FDA required the farm to recall 550 million eggs

Media carried the story for days – Congress held hearings – the egg industry lost consumption for a few weeks.

We needed to do a better job. Could not afford to lose customers.
Additional UEP Programs

- In addition to several educational meetings – UEP revived the Egg Safety Center and updated the website: [www.eggsafety.org](http://www.eggsafety.org) to respond to the media, customers and consumers with helpful information.

- Appointed a Scientific Advisory Council.

- Began to revise the “UEP 5-Star Egg Safety Program”.
The UEP program goes beyond the FDA requirements but is a voluntary program. Additional requirements are:

1. Vaccination of flocks
2. Laboratory Standards
3. Traceability
4. Feed Management
5. Mandatory Verification
6. Egg washing, plant sanitation, etc.
Likely, eggs may be the only product where environmental swaps are taken of the dirt or manure. Despite the frustration and costs, it is extremely important that we assure our customers and consumers of a safe food product. FDA and food producers can be good partners and we believe the egg industry has demonstrated that commitment.
From the beginning of SE being identified as a source of human illness, the egg industry has been working to improve egg safety.

Open communications between the industry and FDA allows for continual improvement and refinement of protocols and procedures which egg farmers can and have put in place to prevent SE on the farm.
U.S. Egg Production Systems

Conventional Cages = approximately 95%

Non-Cage Systems = approximately 5%

Approximately 80% of all eggs produced under the science-based UEP Certified animal welfare program.
To Learn More About U.S. Egg Farming – Visit Us At:
www.uepcertified.com
www.usaeggfarming.com

Thanks

Gene Gregory, President & CEO
United Egg Producers