



| FOOD FOR THOUGHT 2026

FDA recall system does not instill confidence in food safety because of recall time lags, recalls not publicly announced and investigations closed with few details

U.S. PIRG
Education Fund

Food for Thought 2026

**FDA recall system does not instill confidence in food safety
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I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many aspects of our food safety and recall notification system don't instill confidence. Case in point: In June 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced recalls involving three ready-to-eat pasta products shipped to [Kroger and Walmart](#). The concern: Listeria.

Then in September, we had a flurry of new pasta recalls – all related to the June announcements. By October, the stores whose pasta products were affected had expanded to [Trader Joe's](#), then [Albertsons](#), [Baker's](#), [City Market](#), [Dillons](#), [Fred Meyer](#), [Fry's](#), [Giant Eagle](#); [King Soopers](#), [Payless](#), [Ralph and Smith's](#), [Scott & Jon's](#) and [Sprout's](#). After the three products recalled initially, 15 additional types of ready-made pasta products were affected.

As of the last update on [Oct. 30, 2025](#), 25 people had been hospitalized and six people had died during this outbreak, according to the [FDA](#). As it turns out, the first illness was way back in [August 2024](#).

Why did the first recall take [nearly a year](#)? Why did some of the subsequent recalls take three or four months? Could any of the illnesses or deaths have been prevented if more information had been available sooner? That's not publicly known. The investigation by regulators is still active.

This Listeria outbreak is one of 28 foodborne illness outbreaks announced by U.S. food regulators in 2025. An outbreak occurs when multiple people become sick from eating or drinking the same contaminated food.

Of those 28 outbreaks, a recall for a certain brand wasn't announced for [17 of them](#).

“Not all recalls have press releases or are posted.”
– FDA spokesperson

[Thirteen](#) investigations didn't identify even the type of food, such as cucumbers or eggs. Some of those products could still be available for sale, or other products from the same company could also be contaminated, still making people sick.

This could also mean that more people could be in danger from food or machinery that is contaminated with foodborne pathogens, since the ultimate source of these illnesses was not discovered. Regulators can't investigate food producers or distributors they don't know about. Already, 1,003 illnesses, 235 hospitalizations and 22 deaths have been linked to those 28 outbreaks.

The lack of timely recalls connected to outbreaks – or any recall at all – is one of the most interesting takeaways from U.S. PIRG Education Fund's analysis of food recalls and foodborne illnesses in 2025.

Overall, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced 320 food recalls in 2025, compared with [296 in 2024](#).

This doesn't mean that food was less safe or that regulation was better in 2025 – a point we'll pick up again later.

Incomplete information involving outbreaks is just one of our troubling findings.

Here are some of the reasons we're concerned about our food safety and recall notification systems:

* **It sometimes takes years** from the first illness before regulators identify a product to recall in an effort to prevent others from getting sick. The November recall of [infant formula](#) connected to a botulism outbreak took nearly two years; the February recall of [frozen supplemental shakes](#) connected to a Listeria outbreak took more than six years.

* **The FDA doesn't even post** public announcements for all potentially life-threatening recalls. In a Jan. 7, 2025, email to U.S. PIRG, an FDA spokesperson said: "The list on [this page](#) provides information gathered from firm press releases and other public notices about certain recalls of FDA-regulated products. Not all recalls have press releases or are posted on this page." The FDA pointed to its practice [explained here](#).

For example, Newly Weds Foods [recalled](#) 3,500 lbs of breadcrumbs for possible Listeria contamination in July 2025. It was a Class I recall, the most dangerous for consumers.

Another example: the recall of 22 [Wells Enterprises ice cream products](#) in April 2025 because of plastic in the ice cream. This was logged as a [Class II](#) threat, with the possibility of "temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences."

Neither the breadcrumbs recall nor the ice cream recall was picked up for a news release by the FDA, although the recalls did affect numerous products. The existence of the recalls is revealed only in a little-known [FDA enforcement database](#) that frankly is difficult to navigate at times.

CAUSES BEHIND OUTBREAKS

Salmonella: 636 cases

Listeria: 183 cases

Cyclospora: 117 cases

Botulism: 51 cases

E. coli: 11 cases

Hepatitis A: 5 cases

TOTAL: 1,003 cases

* **The threats in nearly half** of all announced recalls in 2025 seem to have been fairly easily avoidable; 48% of recalls stemmed from undeclared allergens or foreign objects such as metal or wood in food. If manufacturers declared all ingredients and used equipment designed to find junk in food, it would help.

* **Food producers clearly** rely on major suppliers whose ingredients they don't adequately test. At least 31 recalls in 2025 involved an ingredient previously recalled that caused a cascade or domino effect – more recalls in the days and weeks ahead. For example, we saw this in 2025 with [cucumbers](#) used in salads, subs and salsa from 10 different companies, and the previously mentioned [pre-cooked pasta](#). Together, they were linked to nearly 100 reported illnesses, with half of victims hospitalized.

* **The FDA delayed implementation** of its previously approved "Traceability Rule" to make it easier for producers and distributors to identify contaminated ingredients. The rule was [delayed from January 2026 to July 2028](#). Notably, five of the 10 recalls that caused a cascade in 2025 involved foods on the FDA's traceability list.

Back to the 1,003 documented illnesses connected to outbreaks. That may seem like a small number of illnesses, and it is in a nation of 340 million. Those are only the people who were sick enough to seek medical care and their case was connected to an outbreak. The toll is far more than 1,003 cases. For example, just with foodborne Salmonella, the CDC estimates it [causes 29 illnesses](#) for each one detected.

With every foodborne illness outbreak, regulators hedge by saying they've probably undercounted the number of people sickened by the contaminated product. The [language](#) used routinely: "The true number of sick people in this outbreak was also likely much higher than the number reported."

Regulators estimate that [one in six](#) are affected by foodborne illness every year. that means [tens of millions](#) of people almost surely became ill from food in 2025, with the vast majority recovering on their own without going to a doctor. Many may not even know that food caused their illness if they just had an upset stomach for a day or so and thought it was a touch of the flu or something else.

Overall, the toll is huge: Foodborne illnesses cost Americans an estimated [\\$75 billion](#) a year in medical care, lost productivity and premature deaths, USDA researchers say. Clearly, foodborne illness is a widespread problem that could affect fewer people if more outbreaks identified a source so the food could be recalled and people could be warned to avoid eating contaminated food they may have already bought.

What's in a number?

The FDA and USDA announced 320 food recalls in 2025, compared with [296 in 2024](#).

As we've said in years past, the total number isn't the be-all, end-all. We always seem to have about 300 food recalls announced in a given year, but that number means only that that's how many recalls were announced that year.

The total doesn't reflect whether food was more or less safe. The total could be driven by how many people got sick enough to get medical attention; recalls don't happen in the cases that regulators don't know about.

Or the total could be driven by how much testing is done by companies and regulators before anyone gets sick, or how many inspections are done by local, state and federal officials. Or the total could be affected by investigators' ability to identify a specific food.

Remember that with the 28 outbreak investigations – where lots of people got sick from the same food – recalls weren't announced in 17 cases. There were real problems, yet no recall was announced, generally because the exact product couldn't be identified.

The total number of announcements is also affected by the number of recalls that regulators choose to publish, the number of cascading recalls (discussed above) and the number of times a company expands a recall by adding more of the same product and publishing a whole new announcement. At least [13 recalls](#) in 2025 involved expansions.

In this year's Food for Thought report, the big question we ask: What can companies, agencies and consumers do to help reduce foodborne illness? This report explores the problems and offers some solutions.

I KEY FINDINGS

Recalls and safety/public health alerts are essentially the same because they both involve food that may be unsafe. Regulators announce recalls for products still for sale; they announce alerts for products where the company hasn't recalled them, or when the items are no longer available for sale but may still be in consumers' or restaurants' pantries, freezers or refrigerators. Use the

* While the supplement market is huge, there weren't many dietary supplement recalls in 2025 (eight recall announcements, plus a ninth recall that wasn't publicly announced on the FDA's recalls website.)

This number doesn't speak to the lack of pathogens or toxins in these products, as is also true with other foods. Of the nine recalls, [only one](#), involving tejocote root, followed FDA sampling. Two followed company testing. Problems were detected with the other six by state regulators or followed illnesses.

Given the [explosion of the market](#) in the last two decades and the relaxed regulation of dietary supplements, described [here](#) in the American Medical Association's Journal of Ethics, this indicates that the FDA may be having difficulty detecting unsafe activity in the marketplace.

* Foreign material contamination led to 28 recalls and nine potential injuries. That's up from 12 such recalls in 2024 and 15 in 2023.

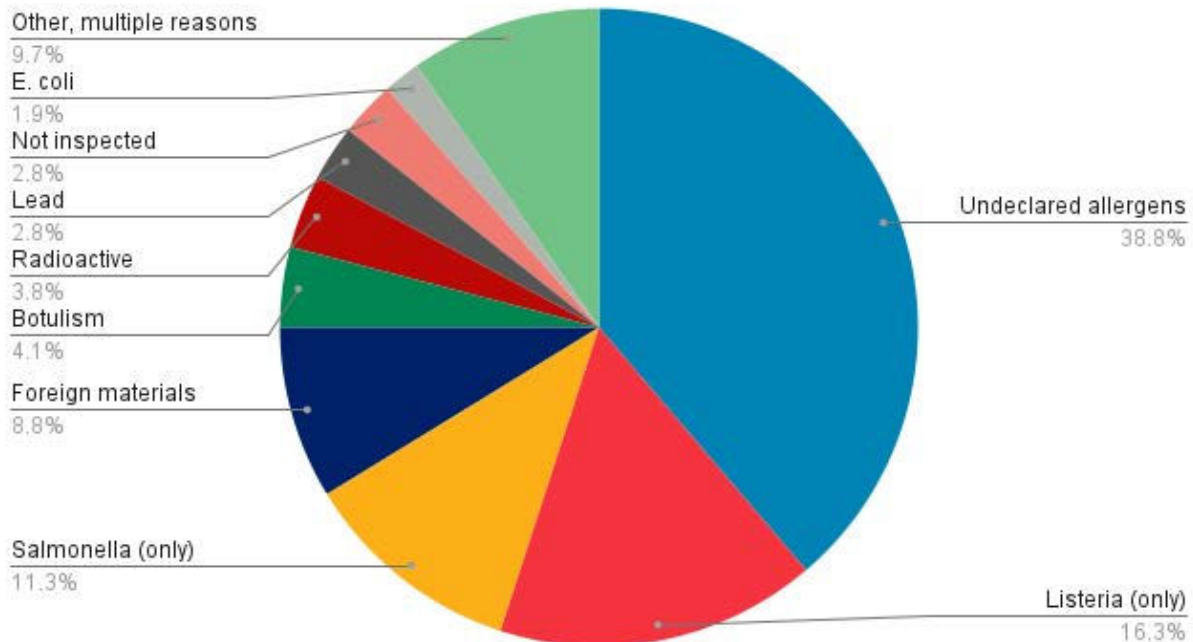
* Milk was the allergen most often not declared, present in 31% of undeclared allergen recalls (40 recalls).

* The FD announced more than [20 unusual recalls](#) and warnings in 2025 for pots and pans that may be contaminated with lead. The lead can leach into food being cooked. The FDA and various states have been [testing](#) some imported cookware that's made of aluminum, brass and aluminum alloys known as Hindalium/Hindolium or Indalium/Indolium.

* There were 13 recalls of pet food in 2025, nearly double from the [seven in 2023](#). Salmonella was the most common cause and can pose a [risk for humans too](#), just from touching the food or bowls.

REASONS FOR FOOD RECALLS IN 2025

This shows the reasons for the 320 recall announcements. Foods that had more than one concern are tallied in the "Other, multiple reasons" category.



SOURCE: U.S. PIRG EDFUND ANALYSIS OF FDA AND USDA DATA

I 28 **FOODBORNE ILLNESS OUTBREAKS**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says it investigates foodborne illness [outbreaks](#) to “control them, so more people do not get sick in the outbreak, and to learn how to prevent similar outbreaks from happening in the future.” Regulators [define](#) these outbreaks as instances where “two or more people get the same illness from the same contaminated food or drink.”

The FDA and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) investigated [28 foodborne outbreaks in 2025](#). Of those, 22 investigations were closed and six remained open as of Jan. 27, 2026.

In total, 1,003 illnesses were reported to the FDA, 235 people were hospitalized and 22 people died in connection with foodborne illness outbreaks in 2025. It’s early in 2026; some of the outbreaks are ongoing.

Only 15 of the 28 outbreak investigations had a food type identified for the cause of the outbreak, such as cucumbers or pastries, and only 11 had a recall associated with the outbreak. This is a decrease from last year, when 22 out of the 28 total investigations had a product type identified (yes, there were 28 outbreak investigations two years in a row.), and 13 had a recall associated with them. This could be for any number of reasons: food traceability issues, lessened company cooperation, less data collection and more.

As for the impact on people in 2025, 34% of all reported illnesses were associated with outbreaks that had no food type identified, and 52% of all reported illnesses were associated with outbreaks that did not have recalls. All of the outbreaks with hospitalizations and deaths had identified

food types and had recalls for specific products, with the exception of the outbreak investigation connected to raw oysters, announced [Dec. 23, 2025](#).

This means that the products that were making people the sickest were removed from the market by companies before the FDA investigation closed, which is great news. However, while it is important to prioritize investigating and stopping the most dangerous outbreaks, the data could mean that the FDA is putting fewer resources towards the less widespread or less dangerous food contamination.

This could mean untraced illnesses, unclean production plants and contaminated products still circulating in the market that could make more people sick in the future.

The most common cause of outbreaks in 2025 was [Salmonella](#), which had 15 different outbreaks linked to 636 illnesses. This is followed by:

- [Listeria](#), with 8 outbreaks and 183 illnesses.
- [Cyclospora](#) with two outbreaks and 117 cases.
- [Botulism](#) with one outbreak and 51 illnesses.
- [E. coli](#) with one outbreak and 11 illnesses
- [Hepatitis A virus](#), with one outbreak and five illnesses.

Because some of these outbreaks are ongoing, there could be more illnesses that are linked to these outbreaks retroactively.

Here are the nine *closed* foodborne illness outbreaks that led to a recall in 2025:

[Mini pastries:](#)

A Salmonella outbreak associated with Sweet Cream brand mini pastries. There were 18 illnesses reported, with one person hospitalized. The [recall](#) was announced on [Jan. 18, 2025](#) and the FDA was notified on Jan. 21, 2025.



[Frozen shakes:](#)

A Listeria outbreak connected to Lyons ReadyCare and Sysco Imperial frozen supplemental shakes manufactured by Prairie Farms Dairy Inc. The FDA reports 42 illnesses, with 41 hospitalizations and 14 deaths. The [recall](#) was announced on Feb. 22, 2025, six and a half years after the first illness was reported on Aug. 17, 2018.



[Eggs \(June 2025\):](#)

A Salmonella outbreak associated with August Egg Co. brown cage-free eggs and brown certified organic eggs. There were 134 reported illnesses, with 38 hospitalizations and one death. On June 6, 2025, the [recall](#) was announced, more than three months after the first illness was reported on Feb. 24, 2025.

[Pistachio cream:](#)

A Salmonella outbreak connected to Emek Spread Pistachio Cacao Cream with

Kadayif. Four illnesses were reported, with one person hospitalized. On July 14, 2025, the [recall](#) was announced, four months after the first illness, on March 10, 2025.

[Eggs \(August 2025\):](#)

A Salmonella outbreak associated with [Country Eggs, LLC](#) “large, brown, cage-free ‘sunshine/omega-3 golden’ yolk eggs.” There were 105 illnesses and 19 hospitalizations. The [recall](#) was announced on Aug. 27, 2025, more than seven months after the first illness on [Jan. 7, 2025](#).

[Ready-to-eat foods:](#)

A Listeria [outbreak](#) linked to Fresh & Ready Foods’ ready-to-eat (RTE) foods, including sandwiches and snack items. There were 10 illnesses, 10 hospitalizations and one death reported. The [recall](#) was announced on May 10, 2025, nearly a year and a half after the first illness on [Dec. 3, 2023](#).



[Cucumbers:](#)

A Salmonella outbreak associated with cucumbers grown by Bedner Growers, Inc. and distributed by Fresh Start Produce Sales, Inc. There were 69 illnesses were reported, including 22 hospitalizations. The [recall](#) was announced by the FDA on May 20, 2025, nearly seven weeks after the first illness was reported on [April 2, 2025](#). The conditions that led to this recall were discovered in a follow-up inspection of Bedner Growers, Inc. in March 2025 after its cucumbers were linked to a [2024 outbreak](#) of two strains of Salmonella, as covered in last year’s [Food for Thought report](#) in the outbreak section.

[Sprouted beans:](#)

A Salmonella outbreak associated with Chetak LLC Group frozen Deep-brand sprouted Mat (Moth) and Moong (Mung) beans, later [expanded](#) to include various other [Deep-brand frozen products](#). There were 12 reports of illnesses, leading to four hospitalizations. The initial [recall](#), announced on July 16, 2025, happened nearly nine months after the onset of the first illness, which occurred on Oct. 22, 2024.

[Moringa leaf powder:](#)

A Salmonella outbreak associated with three brands of organic moringa leaf powder products, [Africa Imports](#), [Food To Live](#) and [Member's Mark](#). The FDA [traced](#) the Salmonella to a single lot of Moringa leaf powder from Vallon Farmdirect PVT LTD, which supplied the powder to these three companies. There were 11 illness reports, with three hospitalizations. The [initial recall](#) was announced on Nov. 12, 2025, six months after the onset of the first illness, on [May 12, 2025](#).

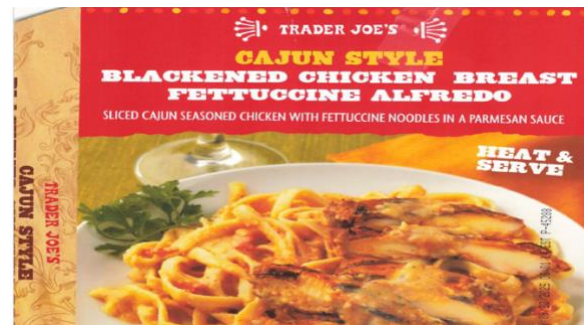
Here are the two *open* foodborne illness outbreaks that had a recall associated with the outbreak in 2025:



[ByHeart infant formula](#)

A botulism outbreak associated with ByHeart infant formula. The first illness was in [December 2023](#), although the cause wasn't known at the time. It took nearly two years to recall, with two batches recalled on [Nov. 8, 2025](#). Then on [Nov. 11, 2025](#), ByHeart Inc. recalled *all* infant formula products.

The last new botulism case reported was one month after the recall. There have been 51 illnesses reported, with all 51 hospitalized. The infants range in age from 16 days to 9 months.



[Prepared pasta meals:](#)

A Listeria outbreak associated with pasta from Nate's Fine Foods Inc./FreshRealm under various store brands. The initial recall was [June 17, 2025](#), nearly a year after the [first illness](#). There were 27 illnesses, 25 hospitalizations and six deaths. At least 18 products sold at 15 major grocery chains were affected, with the [latest recall](#) in October. The last update to this ongoing investigation was [Oct. 30, 2025](#). More recalls and illnesses could still be linked to this strain of listeria.

I CASCADING RECALLS

What is a cascading recall? A cascading recall starts with a recall of a food item that happens to be a common ingredient in other foods. This then leads to a “cascade” of related recalls of the foods that use it as an ingredient. These cascading recalls can take a simple recall and turn it into a multi-month issue, as recalls can be announced months after the initial contamination is discovered.

Because it can take a while for regulators and companies to identify a general source of an illness, let alone a specific product, cascading recalls are relatively common. In fact, in 2025, at least 41 separate recall announcements were associated with cascading recalls across the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) websites, with almost all announcements recalling multiple different products.

Said another way: 10 recalls led to 31 more because they used a contaminated ingredient. Cascading recalls made up 10% of all recall announcements in 2025.

Some of the most significant cascading recalls are detailed below:

Cucumbers:

One of the most extensive cascading recalls of 2025 was the cucumber recall. First, fresh cucumbers from Bedner Growers Inc. were recalled on May 19 due to possible Salmonella contamination. This led to a [cascade of at least 10 other recalls](#) of products that used cucumbers from this farm in their ingredients, from salsas to sandwiches to salads. This cascading recall happened relatively quickly, with the original product being [recalled](#) on May 19. Many of the cascading recalls were

10 recalls in 2025 led to 31 more because they used a contaminated ingredient.

announced within a day or two. The last four were announced from [May 23](#) to [June 4](#) – four to 16 days after the initial recall. The incubation period for Salmonella is typically [12 to 36 hours](#).

Unfortunately, there were 69 illnesses and 22 hospitalizations associated with this Salmonella outbreak, according to [FDA data](#). Ten of the illnesses occurred after the May 19 announcement, with the last three illnesses occurring on May 29.

The following recalls were associated with the [Bedner cucumbers recall](#):

- [Big Y Foods](#): subs, wraps and paninis
- [Ukrop's](#): cucumber salads
- [Ready Meals & Star Market](#): greek salads
- [Marketside](#): cut cucumber
- [East Coast Fresh, TOPS, Wellsley Farms, WEIS, AHOLD, Jack and Olive, Created Fresh, Spring and Sprout](#): salads and salsas
- [PennRose Farms](#): whole cucumber
- [Snowfruit & Snowfox](#): Sushi products
- [Supreme Produce](#): vegetable trays, salads and cut cucumber
- [Kings, Isabelle's Kitchen Inc., Maple Avenue Foods](#): salads
- [TGD Cuts](#): Salsas and cut cucumber products

Prepared pasta meals:

The original recall by FreshRealm was announced [June 17, 2025](#) involving fettuccine believed to be contaminated by Listeria. A public health alert for linguine and fettuccine meals was issued by the USDA on [Sept. 25, 2025](#). This pre-cooked pasta was supplied by Nate's Fine Foods, which ended up supplying pasta meals and pasta salads to 15 different retailers.

The USDA alert contained the first product, a [Marketside linguine meal](#), for which no recall was issued. On Sept. 30, this alert was updated to include a second product, a [Trader Joe's fettuccine meal](#).

In 2025, there were 27 illnesses, 25 hospitalizations, and six deaths associated with this outbreak, according to the [FDA](#). As of Jan. 1, 2026, the last recall was issued on Oct. 9, 2025, but the FDA's investigation into the ultimate source of the Listeria is still ongoing. The following recalls were associated with the contaminated pasta:

- [Albertsons Companies](#): ready-to-eat pasta salads
- [Albertsons Companies Expansion](#): ready-to-eat pasta salads
- [Scott & Jon's](#): pasta meals
- [Giant Eagle](#): ready-to-eat pasta salads
- [Kroger, Baker's, City Market, Dillons, Fred Meyer, Fry's, Gerbes, King Soopers, Payless, Ralphs and Smith's](#): ready-to-eat pasta salads
- [Sprouts](#): ready-to-eat pasta salads

Breadcrumbs:

The company Newly Weds Foods recalled its breadcrumbs for possible Listeria contamination on July 15, which the FDA recorded in its [Access Data database](#), although it did not issue a public announcement. Then 12 days later, four cascading recalls containing these recalled

breadcrumbs were announced, one from the USDA and three from the FDA. There were no reports of illnesses associated with this series of recalls. These recalls were:

- [Reser's Fine Foods](#): ham salads
- [Jewel Osco](#): tuna salad products
- [Randalls, Albertsons](#): tuna salad products
- [Randalls, Albertsons, Tom Thumb](#): tuna salad products

Peaches:

[Moonlight/Kroger](#) recalled multiple batches of yellow and white peaches because they had the potential to be contaminated with Listeria on Oct. 29, 2025. There were no illnesses connected to this recall. A few days later, on Nov. 3, these two cascading recalls were announced:

- [Supreme Produce](#): peach salsa
- [Snow Fruit](#): peach salsa

Grated romano cheese:

On Nov. 25, 2025, Wegmans Food Markets announced a [recall](#) of a Locatelli Grated Pecorino Romano Cheese after routine testing confirmed the presence of Listeria. That same day, the recall was expanded to include an assortment of [Ambriola, Locatelli, Member's Mark, Pinna and Boar's Head](#) grated romano products.

Then a [cascading recall](#) from Boar's Head was issued that contained both grated cheese and chicken caesar items. All of these recalls were published within one or two days of each other, and no illnesses were reported.

Food traceability

One of the issues that makes cascading recalls so dangerous and difficult to track: The ability of a single bad ingredient to impact many different types of products when a single ingredient is recalled. This makes it incredibly important to have a clear record when manufacturers buy certain

ingredients that have a history of being frequently recalled.

For this reason, the FDA published a final rule on Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods in the [Federal Register](#) on Nov. 21, 2022. This [rule](#) requires manufacturers to keep a record of all “critical tracking events” associated with the foods on the Food Traceability List, including soft cheeses, eggs, cucumbers, leafy greens, melons, peppers, crustaceans and [more](#).

The rule originally had a compliance date of Jan. 20, 2026, but last year, the FDA

[proposed delaying](#) the compliance deadline to July 20, 2028. After the deadline was delayed, the [FDA announced](#) that Congress issued a [directive](#) to the FDA not to enforce this rule until the new deadline.

Either way, food traceability is an important step in expediting the cascading recall process, and manufacturers should ensure adequate record-keeping of their products. The fact that this rule doesn't require traceability yet doesn't prevent companies from doing more now to know their suppliers.

FOODS THE FDA WANTS MANUFACTURERS TO TRACK BETTER

These are among the foods frequently recalled that are also often used as ingredients in other products.



Food Traceability List

Cheese (made from pasteurized milk), fresh soft or soft unripened	Tomatoes (fresh)
Cheese (made from pasteurized milk), soft ripened or semi-soft	Tropical tree fruits (fresh)
Cheese (made from unpasteurized milk), other than hard cheese	Fruits (fresh-cut)
Shell eggs	Vegetables (fresh-cut)
Nut butters	Finfish, histamine-producing species (fresh, frozen, and previously frozen)
Cucumbers (fresh)	Finfish, species potentially contaminated with ciguatoxin (fresh, frozen, and previously frozen)
Herbs (fresh)	Finfish, species not associated with histamine or ciguatoxin (fresh, frozen, and previously frozen)
Leafy greens (fresh)	Smoked finfish (refrigerated, frozen, and previously frozen)
Leafy greens (fresh-cut)	Crustaceans (fresh, frozen, and previously frozen)
Melons (fresh)	Molluscan shellfish, bivalves (fresh, frozen, and previously frozen)
Peppers (fresh)	Ready-to-eat deli salads (refrigerated)
Sprouts (fresh)	

[SOURCE: FDA](#)

I EXPANDING RECALLS

Every year, we see cases where a company announces a food recall, and the recall expands in the days and weeks ahead. More pounds of the same meat product. More bags of the same snack. More lots of the same pet food.

We call these expanding recalls. (They're different from what we call cascading or domino recalls – where one contaminated ingredient is used in various products by different food manufacturers, who then issue their own recalls.)

Expanding recalls sometimes make it difficult for consumers – and even advocates – to track what products may be harmful. In some cases, the FDA and USDA post new announcements for the expansions when more products are recalled. And sometimes they don't. Only when you read the announcement do you realize the list expanded or widened or was updated, or you realize that more products were added.

There were [at least 13 expanding recalls in 2025](#). In nine cases, two separate announcements were made. In one case, three separate announcements were made. In three cases, only one announcement was made and it was simply updated.

Multiple announcements contribute to what is often called “recall fatigue.” We can grow numb to the parade of recall announcements and perhaps stop paying attention. Situations such as these, when recalls are announced and expanded one or more times, make it difficult for consumers to keep track of whether they've purchased a contaminated product although, of course, the information needs to be publicized.

Expanding recalls are one of the reasons we don't fixate on the absolute number of recalls from one year to the next. You can't really say, “Oh, there were xx more recalls this year compared with last year” or “There were xx fewer recalls this year” and then use that number to draw sweeping conclusions about food safety or enforcement or anything else. Many factors can skew the totals, including multiple announcements for products where the depth of the problem changes.

Here are some of the most notable expanding recalls of 2025:

Deep, Chetak and Zeenat brands vegetables and fruits

On [July 16, 2025](#), various companies under the Chetak and Zeenat brands recalled different lots of frozen sprouted mung beans because of salmonella concerns.

On [Sept. 10, 2025](#), the company significantly expanded the recall to include various frozen fruits and vegetables that were manufactured using the same equipment as the sprouted mung beans. The products were distributed nationwide.

Silvestri Sweets

On [Nov. 26, 2025](#), Silvestri Sweets Inc. of Geneva, Ill., recalled 5-ounce bags of Choceur Holiday Bark because they may contain undeclared allergens – one flavor with undeclared pecans and another flavor with undeclared wheat. Such ingredients can cause serious allergic reactions and possibly even death. The products were sold at Aldi grocery stores.

Then on [Dec. 22, 2025](#), the company announced an expansion to include additional lot numbers and “best by” dates.

Sprout Organics

On [Sept. 16, 2025](#), Sprout Organics recalled one lot of Sprout Organics Sweet Potato Apple and Spinach because of possible elevated levels of lead. The pouches were sold at Walgreens and independent stores in the southern United States, the company said.

Then on [Sept. 23, 2025](#), the recall was expanded to three additional lots and the regions expanded to states beyond the southern United States, including Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin and Wyoming. The products were also sold online.

Southwind Foods, LLC

On [Aug. 21, 2025](#), Southwind Foods, LLC of Carson, California recalled 13 lots of frozen shrimp because of possible radioactive contamination. It was distributed to 13 states.

On [Aug. 29](#), 14 lots were added to the recall.

On [Sept. 23, 2025](#), the recall expanded again to additional distribution dates and a total of 34 states.

Starway International Group

On [June 12, 2025](#), Starway International Group, LLC, in Maspeth, N.Y., recalled about 9,513 pounds of ineligible frozen Siluriformes fish ball products that were produced in Vietnam, which is not eligible to export Siluriformes fish to the United States.

On [June 25, 2025](#), the recall was expanded to include an additional 15,980 pounds of Siluriformes fish products. It includes two additional Siluriformes sausage products.

Wild Coast Raw

On [Feb. 14, 2025](#), the Department of Agriculture in Washington state and Oregon issued a warning about feeding raw pet food to pets because multiple indoor cats contracted highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI or H5N1.) Some cat owners decided to euthanize their pets after talking with their veterinarians.

The states found that the affected cats all ate the same brand of raw pet food and tested the pet food involved, Wild Coast Raw.

On [March 1, 2025](#), Wild Coast Raw announced a recall of six lots of 16-ounce and 24-ounce frozen boneless free range chicken formula raw pet food for cats that was sold in Washington State and Oregon.

The company said the recall was being “widened to include any raw material sharing similar production dates and lot codes as #22660 and #22664. These two lot codes were included in the WSDA’s public health alert on 2/14.”

This implies there was an initial recall, but we couldn’t actually find an announcement for any initial recall, [only the warning](#) from the two states and a [letter from the company](#) to customers that says a recall was expanded.

Foster Poultry Farms

On [Oct. 4, 2025](#), Foster Poultry Farms, LLC announced a recall of nearly 4 million pounds of chicken corn dogs because they may contain wood pieces.

On [Oct. 6, 2025](#), the recall was updated to note that the potentially harmful products also included ground turkey on a stick.

On [Oct. 17, 2025](#), the recall was updated again to include 118,098 more pounds of chicken corn dogs.

The corn dogs were distributed to retailers, schools and institutional locations nationwide, including Department of Defense and USDA Commodity Foods donations. Six injuries were reported in connection with consumption of corn dogs containing wood pieces.

FreshRealm chicken fettuccine alfredo

On [June 17, 2025](#), FreshRealm in San Clemente, Cal., Montezuma, Ga. and Indianapolis, Ind., recalled chicken fettuccine alfredo ready-to-eat products over possible listeria. The pasta meals, under the Marketside and Home Chef labels, were distributed to Kroger and Walmart stores nationwide. The pasta was supplied by Nate's Fine Foods.

More than three months later, on [Sept. 30, 2025](#), Nate's expanded its recall of pre-cooked pasta to include linguine and farfalle in addition to fettuccine after testing by FreshRealm. This led to a cascade of other recalls involving pasta meals sold at Albertsons, Giant Eagle, Kroger, Sprouts and Trader Joe's, and was one of the most significant food safety events of the year, which is covered in the cascading recalls chapter. As of [Oct. 30, 2025](#), listeria infected 27 people in 18 states. Of those, 25 were hospitalized. Six people died and one pregnant woman lost her baby.

ByHeart infant formula

On [Nov. 8, 2025](#), ByHeart, Inc. recalled two lots of ByHeart Whole Nutrition Infant formula because of concerns of botulism. On [Nov. 11, 2025](#), ByHeart expanded its recall to include *all* ByHeart formula nationwide, including cans and single-serve sticks.

In the weeks that followed, the FDA continued to track new cases of infants who contracted botulism. That's perhaps not

surprising because the FDA also found that numerous retailers large and small continued to sell the recalled formula after Nov. 11.

Weeks after the recall, [the FDA said](#) it received complaints that recalled ByHeart formula was still for sale at stores including Acme, Albertson's, Jewel-Osco, King Sooper's, Kroger, Publix, Safeway, Shaw's, Smith's, Sprouts Organic Market, Star Market, Target and Walmart, Wegman's and Whole Foods.

On Dec. 12, 2025, the FDA sent warning letters to four major retailers that failed to take recalled ByHeart infant formula off their shelves. The four were [Albertsons Cos.](#), [Kroger Co.](#), [Target Corp.](#) and [Walmart, Inc.](#)

On Dec. 15, 2025, the [FDA said](#) its investigators as well as state and local representatives conducted site checks at stores more than 4,000 times to see whether the recalled formula remained for sale. It did. In one case, it remained for sale in more than 175 locations in 36 states, the FDA said.

The FDA also issued [a lengthy open letter](#) to "industry leaders" involved in the manufacturing and distribution of food, specifically meaning manufacturers, packers, distributors, exporters, importers and retailers. The letter reminded companies of their legal obligations under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act about dealing with food recalls.

"Food safety is a shared responsibility, and it is of utmost importance that all parties in the supply chain act swiftly and vigilantly to protect our nation's children from unsafe food," FDA Commissioner Marty Makary [said in a statement](#).

As of Jan. 7, 2026, [51 illnesses](#) have been reported. All of the victims were hospitalized. None died.

Cinnamon

The avalanche of cinnamon recalls isn't an expansion because most of these recalls and alerts involve different companies and suppliers. We're including it here, though, because there are so many and they definitely add to the recall fatigue consumers may feel.

On Dec. 10, 2025, the FDA added cinnamon powder from [Lucky Foods](#) to its long list of cinnamon products flagged because of possible excessive levels of lead, which can be particularly harmful to children. Lucky Foods' cinnamon was recalled by the company on Dec. 9 because of the potential it contained elevated lead levels. This followed sampling and testing efforts by the N.Y. Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The recent list of recalled or flagged cinnamon products goes back to late 2023, when [WanaBana USA recalled](#) all lots of WanaBana, Weis and Schnucks Apple Cinnamon Fruit Purée pouches and cinnamon applesauce because of elevated lead levels and the [FDA conducted an investigation](#).

Four other cinnamon products were recalled in 2025:

September 2025: [SLR Food Distribution, Inc. Recalls Wise Wife Brand Ground Cinnamon Because of Possible Health Risk](#)

October 2025: [Durra Ground Cinnamon 100 G Because of Possible Health Risk](#)

October 2025: [Haitai, Inc. Recalls Haetae \(HT\) Brand Cinnamon Powder 8 oz of Possible Risk](#)

October 2025: [Homeneeds Inc. Recalls Devi Brand Ground Cinnamon \(Dalchini Powder\) Because of Possible Health Risk](#)

Besides the 2025 recalls and WanaBana pouches, at least [16 other cinnamon products](#) have been recalled by the companies or flagged by the FDA since late 2023. With three of the recalls, they were expanded or updated.

They were listed in these public health alerts for ground cinnamon:

- March 6, 2024: [FDA Alert Concerning Certain Cinnamon Products Due to Presence of Elevated Levels of Lead](#)
- July 25, 2024: [FDA Public Health Alert for Additional Ground Cinnamon Product Due to Presence of Elevated Levels of Lead](#)
- July 30, 2024/Aug. 30, 2024/Nov. 1, 2024 Combined Alert: [More Ground Cinnamon Products Added to FDA Public Health Alert Due to Presence of Elevated Levels of Lead](#)

Heavy metals including lead are [naturally occurring](#) in soil and groundwater. In the case of trees that yield cinnamon, lead isn't unexpected. In some cases, lead can get into cinnamon during processing – either accidentally or intentionally. Some producers may [add lead chromate](#) to cinnamon to enhance the color and add weight, which makes it more valuable.

I TIME LAGS

One of the issues that face consumers, companies and regulators is the time lag between that first illness and when there is enough information to work toward recalling the contaminated product. The other part of the time lag: the time between when a recall is announced and when a particular consumer may learn about it.

From the time that someone eats contaminated food:

- It can take [days or weeks](#) for symptoms to develop.
- If the person is sick enough, they may go to the doctor or urgent care in a day or two.
- If fluids are tested, it can take two to three additional weeks for the clinical lab to identify any germs and report results to the doctor and local, state and federal regulators.
- The bacteria material is then shipped to a public health lab, which can take a week.
- The public health lab then conducts a [“whole genome sequencing”](#) analysis to determine the “DNA fingerprint” of the bacteria.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) then tries to figure out whether the bacteria are genetically related to other illnesses in the [PulseNet](#) database.
- If there’s a connection, the CDC will link it to any current investigation or perhaps start one. Investigations typically involve asking people who got sick about what they ate in the hours and days before.
- Keep in mind that at this point, which may be three to four weeks *after* someone ate contaminated food, officials still may not have

identified a specific product to test and recommend for recall.

- When a product is identified, regulators have to negotiate a recall. This also takes time. While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has mandatory [recall authority](#), it’s rarely used. It’s been invoked for food only three times since 2011. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has [no mandatory recall authority](#).

No one in this whole process is necessarily at fault for the length of time it takes to accurately identify a product that caused the foodborne illness outbreak. It does re-emphasize the importance of prevention.

Many of 2025’s most serious outbreaks involved time lags of months or years between the first illness and first product recall. The outbreaks included infant formula, frozen supplemental shakes, prepared pasta meals, a powder supplement and ready-to-eat-sandwiches and snacks.

Here are a few examples of time lags from 2025 recalls:

ByHeart infant formula, infant botulism. It took nearly two years from the first illness to recall.

The last new case was one month after the recall. But symptoms of infant botulism can take as long as several weeks to develop.

Cases: [51](#) illnesses, 51 hospitalizations, 0 deaths.

First illness: [12/2023](#), then one case each in November 2024 and December 2024.

Initial recall of two batches: [11/08/2025](#).

Then on [11/11/2025](#), ByHeart Inc. recalled *all* infant formula products.

Last illness: [12/10/2025](#)

On Dec. 12, 2025, FDA sent [warning letters](#) to four major retailers ([Albertsons Cos.](#), [Kroger Co.](#), [Target Corp.](#) and [Walmart, Inc.](#)) for failing to remove recalled ByHeart infant formula from their store shelves despite being notified of the recall. On Dec. 15, 2025, FDA issued a [press release](#) and [reminded industry](#) about its legal duties regarding food recalls under the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act. FDA asked companies to follow best practices when carrying out recalls. This is especially important for recalls involving foods for infants and young children, who are among our most vulnerable populations.

Lyons Magnus LLC and Sysco Imperial frozen supplemental shakes manufactured by Prairie Farms Dairy Inc., Listeria.

It took more than six years from the first illness to recall.

Cases: 42 illnesses, 41 hospitalizations, 14 deaths

First case: [8/17/2018](#)

Recall: [2/22/2025](#)

Last case: [3/13/2025](#)

The [CDC investigated this outbreak](#) in 2018, and again in 2021, and again in 2023.

The CDC believed some food served in long-term care facilities and nursing homes was the cause, “but there was not enough information to identify a specific food.”

The CDC [reopened the probe](#) in October 2024 after six new illnesses. During 2024 through Jan. 23, 2025, the CDC tallied [20 cases](#). Tracing identified a “[product of interest](#)” in February 2025, based in part on victims who were on liquid diets, and the specific outbreak strain was linked to environmental samples from Prairie Farms.

By Feb. 21, 2025, the CDC connected 18 other illnesses with the specific outbreak strain, for a total of 38 illnesses. The Lyons ReadyCare and Sysco Imperial Frozen Supplemental Shakes were recalled [Feb.22](#).

As of Feb. 24, 2025, among the 38 illnesses, there were 37 hospitalizations and 12 deaths. By May 16, four more illnesses and two more deaths were reported, for a total of 42 illnesses, 41 hospitalizations and 14 deaths. The CDC declared the outbreak over and the FDA’s investigation was closed.

ANATOMY OF A RECALL

Let’s suppose someone eats something contaminated with Listeria or Salmonella on March 1.

March 8 - Symptoms show up.

March 9 - Person goes to the doctor. Fluids are collected.

March 23 - Lab identifies specific bacteria; reports results to local, state and federal regulators.

March 30 - Bacteria sent to a public health lab for “[whole genome sequencing.](#)”

April 3 - CDC determines whether the bacteria are genetically related to other illnesses in the PulseNet [database](#). Say there’s a connection but no recall yet. Data from interviews with patients about what they ate before they got sick can help investigators zero in on a specific product.

April 6 - If regulators identify a potential product, they do more investigation, perhaps by testing unopened products off the shelf or visiting the plant where the food was processed.

April 10 - Optimistically, this might be the soonest investigators may lock in on a product.

April 13 – Regulators negotiate a recall with the company; virtually all food recalls are voluntary, not mandatory. Recall announced.

Nate's Fine Foods Inc./FreshRealm prepared pasta meals sold under various store brands, Listeria.

It took nearly a year from the first illness to the first recall.

Cases: 27 illnesses, 25 hospitalizations, 6 deaths

First case: [8/1/2024](#)

Initial recall/alert: [6/17/2025](#)

Last case: [10/16/2025](#)

The first recall involving three products was announced on [June 17, 2025](#). Then three months later, on Sept. 25, 2025, the USDA issued a [public health warning](#), about a Marketside linguine meal sold by Walmart and a fettuccine meal sold by Trader Joe's. There were no other products recalled until the [update](#) on Sept. 30, when a Trader Joe's meal was recalled in connection to the warning.

The Listeria was traced to pre-cooked pasta supplied by [Nate's Fine Foods](#) that had been used in other prepared pasta meals. This led to a cascade of six other recalls that all used the contaminated pasta, affecting a total of 18 products sold by 15 major grocery chains.

The last recall in this cascade, [pasta salad from Sprouts](#), was announced on Oct. 9, 2025, more than 14 months after the first illness was reported.

In total, 27 people have reported getting sick due to this [outbreak](#), with 25 people hospitalized and 6 deaths. As of Jan. 19, 2026, this outbreak is still ongoing, and more recalls and illnesses could still be linked to this strain of listeria.



Fresh & Ready Foods LLC ready-to-eat sandwiches and snacks, Listeria:

It took almost a year and a half from the first illness to recall.

Cases: 10 illnesses, 10 hospitalizations, 1 death.

First case: [12/3/2023](#)

Last case: [9/9/2024](#)

Recall: [5/10/2025](#)

People started to get sick from ready-to-eat sandwiches and snacks in Dec. 2023. Over a year after that, from [March 31 to April 15, 2025](#), regulators conducted an inspection of a Fresh & Ready Foods manufacturing facility, and found Listeria that matched the strain that was getting people sick.

In response, Fresh and Ready Foods conducted a [recall](#) of 86 ready-to-eat products that had been manufactured with contaminated equipment.

On Sept. 5, 2025, the FDA issued a [warning letter](#) to Fresh and Ready Foods encouraging the company to take further steps to ensure cleanliness. This was partially due to its history of contamination, as the FDA had detected Listeria at its facility in [2017](#).

This raises the question of whether this outbreak, with the illnesses and one death, could have been prevented with more oversight.



Products from Africa Imports were sold on its website. Food to Live products were sold on e-commerce platforms including Amazon, eBay, Etsy, Target and Walmart. The product from Member's Mark was sold at Sam's Clubs nationwide.

The FDA [traced](#) the Salmonella outbreak to a single lot of moringa leaf powder from Vallon Farmdirect PVT LTD.

Moringa leaf powder, Salmonella
It took six months from the first illness to recall.

Cases: 11 illnesses, 3 hospitalizations, 0 deaths

First case: [5/12/2025](#)

Last case: [9/4/2025](#)

Recall: [11/12/2025](#)

Exactly seven months after the first Salmonella illness was reported, three brands of organic Moringa leaf powder products were recalled, from [Africa Imports](#), [Food To Live](#) and [Member's Mark](#).



How long does it take to get sick from food contaminated by bacteria?

Symptoms such as vomiting, fever and diarrhea can take a few hours or a few weeks to develop after eating contaminated food, depending on the bacteria and the quantity, according to the CDC.

Here are the most common pathogens and the incubation periods, from exposure to the onset of symptoms:

- Campylobacter - 2 to 5 days**
- E. coli - 3 to 4 days**
- Listeria - Within 2 weeks**
- Salmonella - 6 hours to 6 days**
- Vibrio - 1 to 2 days**

WHY IS FOOD RECALLED?

The Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture [announce](#) recalls they believe “potentially present a significant or serious risk to the consumer or user of the product.” This can mean harmful levels of bacteria or toxins, or undeclared allergens that could cause someone to stop breathing, or items that don’t belong in food, such as glass or metal.

In 2025, recalls were announced at a pace of nearly one every day. But not all of the recalls that companies issue in a year are announced by these agencies. Some may be disclosed only in a company news release or merely recorded in this [rather obscure FDA database](#). The FDA does have the [power](#) to force the recall of a product, but this rarely happens (only three times since 2011.) The USDA has [no mandatory recall authority](#).

The breakdown of the reasons for food recalls is both a reflection of which issues are most prevalent in foods and which issues are [deemed by companies and regulators](#) to be dangerous or widespread enough to announce publicly. The goal is to alert

retailers selling the product or consumers who already bought it.

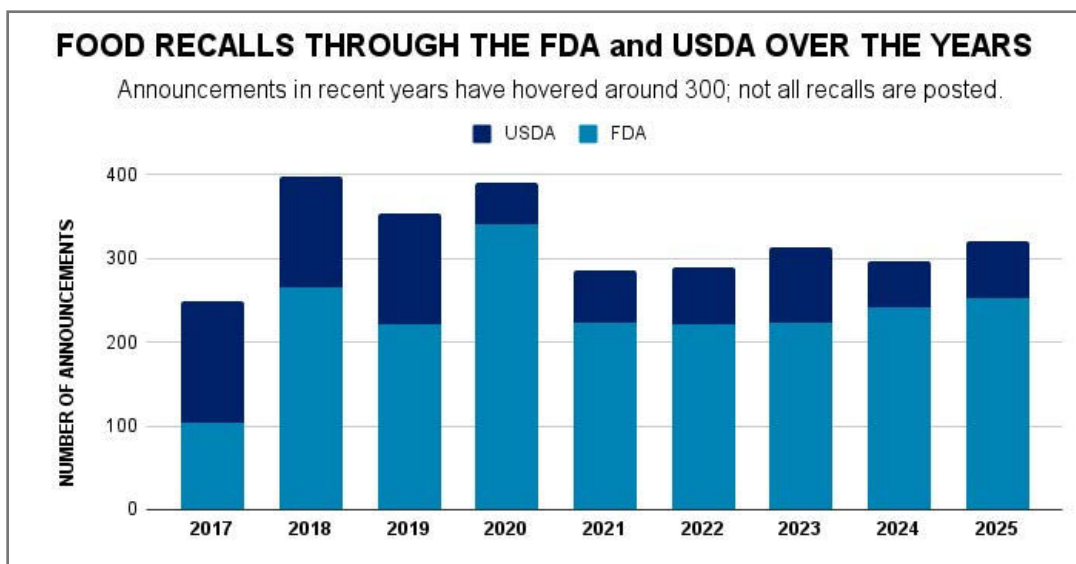
There were [253](#) FDA recall announcements in 2025, and [67](#) USDA recalls announced. Out of the combined 320 in 2025, the top three causes were:

1. Undeclared allergens – 39%
2. Foodborne pathogens including Listeria, Salmonella, botulism and E. coli – 34%.
3. Foreign items such as wood, glass – 9%.

Among the issues in the “other” category in 2025: rodent contamination, undeclared alcohol, bird flu and toxins such as yellow oleander and a cleaning agent.

How most problems are uncovered:

1. Testing by companies and regulators.
2. Inspections by state and federal regulators.
3. People get sick, seek medical care and investigators explore what they ate.
4. Retailers or distributors notice issues such as incorrect package labels or foul smells.
5. Consumers report issues such as an allergic reaction or foreign object found in their food.



I UNDECLARED ALLERGENS

One minute, someone with allergies can appear to be totally healthy. The next, they can be struggling to breathe. This is the reality for the [33 million Americans](#) who live with potentially life-threatening food allergies: Every 10 seconds, one of them goes to the hospital due to a food-related allergic reaction, according to [Food Allergy Research and Education](#).

To keep people with food allergies safe, a product's packaging must disclose which allergens – if any – that it contains. The biggest cause of recalls in 2025 was undeclared allergens. Two in five recalls in 2025 were because a product failed to properly disclose the allergens it contained.

There were 124 recalls linked to undeclared allergens out of the 320 total across the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In addition, there were seven recalls only for undeclared food additives and dyes. Food additives aren't among the [nine federally recognized allergens](#), but foods can be recalled for not disclosing these substances because they are a common allergen. So we're looking at a total of 131 recalls for undeclared ingredients known to cause allergic reactions.

That tracks with previous years; we typically see more than 100 recalls every year stemming from undeclared allergens.

More than 25% of allergen recalls stemmed from *multiple* undeclared allergens. There were seven undeclared ingredients in [these cookies](#): sesame, tree nuts (almonds), red 40, red 3, blue 1, yellow 5 and yellow 6.

THE 9 MAJOR ALLERGENS

Milk

Eggs

Fish

Crustacean shellfish

Tree nuts

Peanuts

Wheat

Soybeans

Sesame

There were four in this [honey mustard](#): peanut, sesame, soy and wheat.

Overall, milk was the most undeclared allergen: It appeared in 40 recalls (31%), whether it was the only undeclared allergen or one among many.

Undeclared allergen recalls are big in other ways, too: major brands such as [Blue Bell Ice Cream](#) and [Häagen-Dazs](#) saw recalls of this type, and one recall involved nearly [500,000 pounds of ready-to-eat breakfast sandwiches](#) that failed to disclose sesame.

Allergens are a serious health concern and a big reason for recalls. Why don't manufacturers disclose allergens when they're supposed to? What's being done to keep consumers safe?

The law

Congress passed the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act [in 2004](#),

which targeted eight major allergens: milk, eggs, fish, Crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat and soybeans. Sesame was added by the Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education and Research Act that took effect on [Jan. 1, 2023](#). These nine account for more than 90% of serious food allergies and serious allergic reactions.

The law requires food labels to disclose the allergens in the product, with the exception of foods packaged *after* they're purchased.

So when you order a bagel with cream cheese from your favorite bagel shop, it doesn't need to have a label telling you what's in it when it's handed to you. But if the bagel shop is selling containers of cream cheese, those do (even if it's the same cream

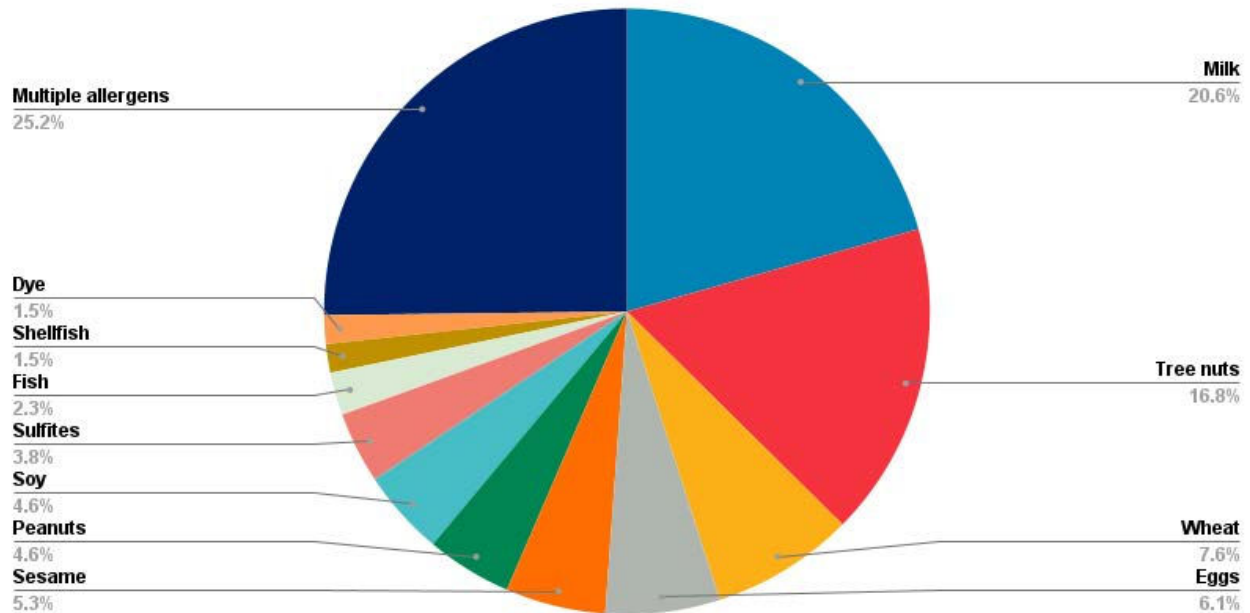
cheese in the bagel you just ordered). Allergen warnings on food labels are common, such as bolded ingredients or statements like "contains: (allergen)."

Even if a food doesn't contain a certain allergen, manufacturers may also choose to add statements such as "may contain traces of..." or "produced in a facility that processes..." These disclosures are not required by law, and the differences between them may be confusing to consumers.

"There is evidence that there is no factual difference among each of these three statements as pertains to level or likelihood of contamination," according to [an article in the National Library of Medicine](#) by three doctors at the University of Arizona.

WHICH UNDECLARED ALLERGENS CAUSED RECALLS IN 2025

We included sulfites and dyes here. The FDA recognizes that certain levels can cause an allergic reaction in some.



Allergen contamination can come from many different sources. Vanessa Balagot, food safety and quality analyst at Source86, [identified](#) four major sources of contamination:

*** Labeling errors**

In 2025, [Ritz](#) recalled 70 cases of what were, according to the packaging, cheese and cracker sandwiches. Really, they were peanut butter cracker sandwiches that had been improperly packaged.

In another case, [Blue Bell](#) accidentally put Moo-llennium Crunch Ice Cream, which contains almond, walnut and pecan, in Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough cartons.

*** Supplier oversights**

In February 2025, certain lots of six varieties of [Ulker Brand](#) snack rolls, biscuits and wafers were recalled because of undeclared wheat, egg and/or milk. After investigating a consumer complaint of an allergic reaction, the company discovered that “the issue originated from a supplier who inadvertently failed to fully disclose all allergens while translating the ingredient list,” the [recall announcement said](#). “We are actively working with the supplier to implement stricter labeling controls, including an additional verification process for multilingual labels.”

*** Reformulations**

Manufacturers sometimes change their recipes or suppliers, which means their labels need to be updated. If that doesn’t happen, undeclared allergens can sneak in.

In June 2025, [Springville Meat & Cold Storage Co.](#) recalled 15,388 pounds of jerky because the jerky contained anchovies. But the product labels didn’t declare that allergen.

The source of the problem was the Worcestershire sauce used to make the jerky, which had not previously contained fish. “The establishment previously used Worcestershire sauce without anchovies, but it was discovered that the new Worcestershire sauce does contain anchovies,” the [recall announcement said](#). It’s not known whether the supplier failed to disclose it or whether the manufacturer didn’t notice the disclosure when it started using a new Worcestershire sauce.

“The problem was discovered during production observations by FSIS inspectors,” the [recall notice said](#).

*** Cross-contamination**

Even when equipment is cleaned, it may contain trace amounts of allergens. For people with serious allergies, the smallest quantity of allergen can be enough to cause an extreme allergic reaction.

Whatever the reason for an allergen being undeclared, allergens must be clearly disclosed on a food’s product label.

Then there are sulfites

Although sulfites aren’t considered a major allergen by law, the FDA still regulates sulfite levels in food to keep them within safe limits to protect people who do have an allergy. For some, sulfite exposure can cause rashes, hives, flushing, low blood pressure, abdominal pain and diarrhea, and in other cases can cause “life-threatening anaphylactic and asthmatic reactions” in extreme cases, [according to](#) researchers Hassan Vally and Neil LA Misso.

Sulfites are commonly used as preservatives, and can be found in many of the foods we eat everyday. Six recalls in 2025 stemmed from sulfite levels: [Floria dried apricots](#), [Paras golden raisins](#), [Nirwana Foods golden](#)

[raisins](#), [President Brand licorice plums](#), [Joy Luck dried lily flowers](#) and various [Texas Pete Hot Sauces](#).

The European Food Safety Authority [found](#) there's no clear point at which sulfite consumption becomes an issue, but those with diets high in sulfites may be at elevated

risk. The FDA considers a sulfite content of [10 parts per million](#) or more to be significant enough to require being reported on a product's label. Sulfites also pose an increased risk to people with asthma, who number more than 28 million in the United States, [according](#) to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

TIPS TO AVOID FOODS WITH ALLERGENS

- Learn about allergen labeling practices:
 - [Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004](#)
 - [Guidance for Food Industry: Q & A Regarding Food Allergen Labeling](#)
 - [Food Allergens - FAACT](#)
 - [How to Read an Ingredient Label \(FDA\)](#)
- Make a list of allergy-friendly food companies so you know who it's safe to buy from.
- Read the ingredients of every product, even ones you regularly buy. Manufacturers can change their recipes and practices.
- Reach out to companies to ask about their cleaning and safety practices.
- Make sure that your friends and family know about allergy safety. Even if they don't have allergies, what they serve or gifts of food could be an issue for anyone they know who has allergies.
- Know that pet food and non-food products (such as personal care items) can have food allergens in them.
- If you believe a product has undeclared allergens, you can report that to the FDA [here](#) or the USDA (if it's a meat, poultry or egg product) [here](#).

I **FOODBORNE PATHOGENS**

One in six people get sick from a foodborne illness each year. More than 100,000 are hospitalized and thousands die.

The second most prevalent reason for recalls in 2025 was foodborne pathogens, including Listeria, Salmonella, botulism and E. coli. These foodborne pathogens caused 34% of the recall announcements across the FDA and USDA:

- 16% of all recalls were caused by Listeria.
- 11% by Salmonella.
- 4% by botulism.
- 2% by E. coli.
- There were also two instances of a product being recalled due to the presence of both Listeria and Salmonella.

These pathogens also caused all of the illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths that were part of outbreaks investigated in 2025.

Listeria

[Listeria bacteria](#) are found in soil, water and animal feces. People can get infected by eating foods or touching surfaces exposed to the bacteria.

Foods most susceptible to Listeria, per the [FDA](#) and [CDC](#):

- Unpasteurized milk, yogurt and soft cheeses.
- Some processed foods such as deli meat, soft cheeses or hot dogs. contaminated after processing.
- Ice cream.
- Raw or processed vegetables.
- Raw or processed fruits.

Salmonella

[Salmonella bacteria](#) generally live in human and animal intestines; we can get sick when germs from contaminated feces get into water and food.

Foods most susceptible to Salmonella, per the [FDA](#) and [CDC](#):

- Raw or undercooked meat and poultry products.
- Raw or undercooked eggs, egg products and dough.
- Raw or unpasteurized milk and other dairy products.
- Raw fruits such as cantaloupes.
- Leafy green vegetables.
- Other vegetables such as cucumbers and onions.
- Flour.
- Pet food.
- Prepackaged salads.
- Processed foods, such as frozen pot pies and stuffed chicken entrees.

Botulism

Botulism is caused by a toxin produced by Clostridium botulinum bacteria, which is found “naturally in many places,” according to the [CDC](#). However, in certain low-oxygen environments, such as improperly preserved, fermented or canned foods, the bacteria can become dangerous, even deadly.

Foods most susceptible to Botulism, per the [CDC](#) and [USDA](#):

- Improperly canned, preserved, or fermented foods.
- Fresh vegetables.
- Figs.
- Meats.
- Poultry.
- Seafood.
- Some tomatoes

E. coli

Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria also live in the [intestines of healthy people and animals](#). Most types of E. coli don't cause severe illness, but a few strains – often E. coli O157:H7 – can cause serious intestinal illness.

An important and alarming distinction about E. coli: Unlike other bacteria, you can get an infection from just a [tiny amount](#) of contamination. It could be something as common as a slightly undercooked piece of beef or from swallowing a mouthful of pool water that's contaminated with E. coli.

People can also easily get infected with E. coli from another person if that person has contamination on their hands and hasn't properly washed.

Foods most susceptible to E. coli, according to the [FDA](#) and [CDC](#):

- Raw or undercooked beef and poultry.
- Raw fruit.
- Leafy greens and other vegetable row crops such as spinach and lettuce because of water runoff from animal farms.
- Sprouts.
- Raw milk or cheese.
- Unpasteurized juice or cider.
- Contaminated pool water or water supplies.

How long does it take to get sick from food contaminated by bacteria?

Symptoms such as vomiting, fever and diarrhea can take a few hours or a few weeks to develop after eating contaminated food, depending on the bacteria and the quantity, according to the [CDC](#).

Here are the most common pathogens:

- Campylobacter - 2 to 5 days
- E. coli - 3 to 4 days
- Listeria - Within 2 weeks
- Salmonella - 6 hours to 6 days
- Vibrio - 1 to 2 days

I DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

It's estimated that at least [60%](#) of adults in the United States have used supplements. The market for supplements itself reflects this scale, growing to nearly \$70 billion in 2024, [according](#) to the Nutrition Business Journal. About 4,000 supplements were on the market in [1994](#). That soared to [50,000 to 80,000 supplements in 2020](#), produced at 10,000 facilities worldwide.

As far as food safety goes, dietary supplements are rough terrain. While some dietary supplements may work as advertised, others may not. Some dietary supplements can also have adverse effects that are not advertised, or may be labeled with inaccurate ingredient lists. There were nine dietary supplement recalls in 2025 – from [kratom powder](#) to [tejocote root](#) to [Moringa leaf powder](#) – that highlight the risks of supplements and the importance of making informed decisions as consumers consider whether any supplement is right for them. (Only eight recalls were publicly announced on [the FDA's recalls website](#).)

We'll be diving into those considerations in this chapter, using the example of the tejocote root recall – and the [FDA's November warning](#) that includes more than 20 [tejocote products](#) – to highlight the common issues consumers run into with dietary supplements: not knowing whether a supplement works, not knowing whether a supplement is safe and not knowing whether what's *on* the bottle is what's *in* the bottle.

Regulation

The [Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act](#) (DSHEA) of 1994 defines a dietary supplement as a “dietary ingredient” that's swallowed and is intended to enhance one's diet, [according to the Food and Drug](#)

[Administration](#) (FDA). Examples include, but are not limited to, vitamins, minerals, herbs and extracts. This is the definition of dietary supplements we use in this report.

It's easy to think of dietary supplements as medicine, but legally they're not. A “dietary supplement is not intended to treat, prevent or cure any disease,” according to an [article](#) published in the journal *Nutrients*. While supplements can support overall well being and fill nutritional gaps in your diet, they can't replace food and are legally different from medicines, which the FDA regulates as drugs.

Dietary supplements occupy a regulatory middle ground between food and drugs that gives companies a lot of leeway.

One key difference between dietary supplements and drugs is that dietary supplements do not require approval from the FDA before going on the market, according [an article](#) published in the *AMA Journal of Ethics*. “Manufacturers are not required to provide the agency with basic information about their products, including names or ingredients, before selling them.

This leaves the agency with no clear view of what's on the market at any given time.” Another difference between dietary supplements and drugs is the “generally recognized as safe” (GRAS) loophole. PIRG has previously written about GRAS [here](#).

The loophole affects everything from dietary supplements to food additives.

Companies use GRAS to skip the FDA's premarket review process for new ingredients, according to a history of the

loophole [written by](#) Rachel Harrison for New York University News. In 1958, the agency began reviewing ingredients in food to make sure that they were safe, she writes. So the GRAS rule was created: if it's already common knowledge that something is safe, then it doesn't need to be reviewed by the FDA. Since 1997, it's been up to manufacturers to determine whether new ingredients are "generally recognized as safe" or not. They don't need to involve the FDA in this process.

This doesn't mean that supplements are totally unregulated, however. Like with food manufacturers, the FDA [says](#) that it inspects dietary supplement manufacturing facilities "to reveal noncompliance with federal standards for quality and accurate labeling." The [agency also looks at](#) how dietary supplements are marketed online. Are they labeled incorrectly? Are they marketed as drugs? They're not supposed to be.

Instead of getting ahead of problems, the FDA generally needs to wait until there's a problem with a dietary supplement to take action, according to [an article](#) published in the AMA Journal of Ethics.

The FDA can push a company to recall a supplement if the regulator can prove that the product is unsafe, but as we note with tejocote root, it's not always clear how safe a supplement or an ingredient is, and research takes a while. Even if there is enough evidence to mandate a recall, the recall can be fought in court for years.

The FDA often relies on support from state-level regulators to catch hazardous supplements. So while dietary supplements aren't totally unregulated, there aren't very strong protections for consumers either.

9 dietary supplement recalls in 2025

This uneven regulatory landscape could explain how lead may have made it into Zaarah Herbals Shatavari Powder, which was recalled on [Jan. 27, 2025](#). Shatavari is used by Ayurvedic practitioners to treat nervous disorders, inflammation and certain infectious diseases, according to an [article](#) published in the Asian Pacific Journal of Infectious disease.

Six weeks later, on [March 10](#), Zaarah Herbals recalled four more supplements after they were also found to have the potential to contain lead, as well as arsenic. In both cases, the recalls stemmed from analysis done by the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, Food & Standards Division.

On Nov. 12, 2025, Moringa powder products from [Africa Imports](#) and [Food To Live](#) were recalled for possibly containing Salmonella. An [outbreak](#) investigation linked to these products led to 11 illnesses and three hospitalizations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared the outbreak over on [Dec. 4, 2025](#). Moringa is traditionally "used to cure wounds, pain, ulcers, liver disease, heart disease, cancer and inflammation," according to an [article](#) published in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences.

The FDA, CDC and at least three states investigated Moringa powder products after people started testing positive for the same strain of Salmonella. The Virginia Department of Health tested the Africa Imports product, and the Florida Department of Health tested the Food To Live product.

Both the FDA and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development tested a third supplement, [Member's Mark Super Greens](#), that contained Moringa powder, among other ingredients. Three of the four samples contained the same strain of Salmonella as identified in the outbreak. All [Member's Mark Super Greens](#) dietary supplement powders, regardless of lot codes and best by/use before dates, were recalled. All three products – Africa Imports, Food To Live and Member's Mark – sourced their moringa leaf from Vallon Farmdirect PVT LTD of Johdpur, India.

Other notable supplement recalls:



A Dorado Nutrition/Space Garden brand spermidine supplement was recalled on [April 14, 2025](#) because it contained wheat, an allergen, which the package did not declare as required. The FDA was alerted by Supplement Manufacturing Partners, Inc. after an investigation by that company.

Spermidine is believed to have anti-aging properties, according to an [article](#) in the journal Autophagy. The FDA categorized this product under Food & Beverages.



Vanguard Enterprises, LLC dba Bedrock MFG recalled its Monarch Premium Kratom Powder on [Oct. 30, 2025](#), over Salmonella concerns. The recall stemmed from testing by the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Kratom is categorized as a mild stimulant aimed at managing mood, mental health, energy, etc., according to an [article in Frontiers in Pharmacology](#). The FDA categorized this product under Food & Beverages.

Tejocote Root

One of the broadest recalls in 2025 concerned tejocote root products.

Also known as Mexican hawthorn, tejocote root comes from the tejocote tree. Tejocote root has been traditionally used in Mexico to regulate bowel movements, according to [Mexico's National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity](#). The fruit is used for food and is believed to help treat coughs, congestion and heart conditions.



The two products above, [Green Royalty](#) and [ELVPOTEC](#), may appeal to people who want to lose weight.

Tejocote root is often marketed as a weight loss supplement in the United States, [according to](#) Dr. Armando Gonzalez Stuart, who researches herbal supplements at the University of Texas at El Paso. This claim is not always explicitly stated, but can be very strongly implied by how the product is marketed.

Consider the promotional materials (photos above) for two tejocote root products we looked at online.

While the second advertisement mentions weight loss, the first product's advertisement never explicitly states that. Instead, the first advertisement pairs waist measurement imagery that implies weight loss with mentions of appetite control.

This could be an attempt to market tejocote root as a natural, non-prescription alternative

to GLP-1 agonists such as Ozempic. These GLP-1 drugs, among other things, support weight loss by slowing digestion and making a user feel more full after every meal, [according](#) to the Cleveland Clinic.

We couldn't find any scientific evidence to support or refute these claims about tejocote. Maybe tejocote root helps with weight loss; maybe it doesn't. There's not much research on excessive tejocote consumption, according to an [article in the Journal of Medical Toxicology](#).

However, case studies of adverse reactions to tejocote root abound. [These case studies](#) suggest that tejocote root can cause heart issues when consumed in excess.

Without more information, however, it's difficult to tell what this means for the general population.

What's the difference between safe and unsafe consumption of tejocote root? Are certain people at higher risk based on preexisting conditions or potential interactions with other medications they take, or for other reasons?

These questions, and more, are difficult to answer while research is so scarce, and are among the reasons people should consult with their doctor before taking any supplement, [the FDA says](#).

Tejocote root recalls

Tejocote root is a case where it's not clear the supplement works the way it's marketed or that it's safe. This year, a tejocote root recall highlighted a third concern with supplements: What all is in the bottle?

On [Sept. 15, 2023](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report about weight loss supplements sold online that were labeled as tejocote root but that contained yellow oleander, which is toxic. The FDA within days [launched an investigation](#) to test various products for yellow oleander, including ones sometimes labeled as *Crataegus mexicana*, *Raiz de Tejocote* and Mexican Hawthorn.

At various times since then, the FDA has [added to a list](#) of products that it's advising consumers to avoid. Some of them have been recalled. In other cases, the companies

haven't agreed to recalls or the company can't be reached.

On Nov. 3, 2025, the [FDA said](#) it finished testing more products, and found three more that tested positive for yellow oleander. The list now contains more than 20 tejocote root products.

“The agency is reminding consumers to avoid these products because they contain toxic yellow oleander and can cause neurologic, gastrointestinal and cardiovascular adverse health effects that may be severe, or even fatal,” the [FDA warning said](#).

Of the three new ones, [SiluetaYa Mexican Tejocote Roots](#), was recalled. With the other two, the companies haven't committed to a recall. Those two are [SdB Semilla de Brasil Tejocote Root and SdB ELITE](#). Remember the FDA can issue a mandatory recall – but it involves a long legal process, so it rarely happens (only three times since 2011).

About half of the products were sold on Amazon. Others were sold on well known websites such as eBay and Etsy.

Of the [20-plus products, about half were recalled](#). With the others, the companies either refused to issue a recall or couldn't be reached by the FDA. In some cases without a recall, the sale listings were removed on Amazon, [the FDA said](#).

TIPS IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SUPPLEMENTS

- **Talk to your doctor about any supplements you're interested in.**
- **Follow the use instructions on the label. Not doing so can be unsafe.**
- **Remember that dietary supplements aren't a replacement for prescription medicines or a healthy diet.**
- **Understand that “natural” doesn't mean safe.**
- **Don't trust trends without doing research first.**
- **Don't trust products that seem too good to be true. Products that appeal to emotions or make big claims need to be backed by research.**
- **Report potentially problematic supplements to the FDA to keep yourself and others safe.**

I THE RECALL NOTIFICATION PROBLEM

When a food safety problem is discovered, there isn't much done to make sure consumers find out.

Under the FDA, companies [are expected to](#) notify the FDA and issue a news release.

Under the USDA, companies [must notify](#) the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

No one has to contact grocery stores or restaurants. No one has to notify consumers.

However, many grocers and retailers have clauses in their contracts with suppliers that they must be notified in a timely manner by the supplier if a recall is initiated, as we've covered in [past reports](#). In fact, grocers often learn of a recall from their supplier before the FDA or USDA even posts a public notice online or sends out emails to those who've signed up for real-time alerts.

Clearly, the goal should be safer food so recalls aren't needed. But until we never have a recall, how do we improve this? No single method of notifying the public will address the problem.

Notices posted in stores only help if a shopper goes to that store and shops in that department in a timely fashion. Some grocers suggest customers should regularly monitor their corporate websites or social media accounts, but that's just not reasonable.

An increasing number of stores *do* try to notify consumers who purchased a specific recalled product, but they can do that only if a shopper has provided contact information.

For various reasons, we see cases every single year where people are getting sick from foods long after the recall was publicly announced and past the likely incubation period.

People can be proactive by checking on recalls periodically (at least once a week) through the [FDA](#) and [USDA](#) web sites, or signing up for email alerts or using an app that provides real-time alerts. In addition, it's useful to sign up for any alerts your grocery stores use to notify customers of recalls involving products they specifically purchased.

However, it's important to know the FDA doesn't post every recall to its recalls and alerts [website](#) – only what officials deem to be the ones that pose a “significant or serious risk.”

A disclaimer at the top of the page says: “The list below provides information gathered from press releases and other public notices about certain recalls of FDA-regulated products. Not all recalls have press releases or are posted on this page. See [additional information about recalls](#) for a more complete listing.”

I PET FOOD

The FDA oversees all pet food, as well as food for livestock and farm animals. For our Food for Thought report, we include recalls for pet food recalls but not for livestock and farm animal feed.

Food we feed our dogs, cats and other indoor pets represents a bigger threat to people, because we often touch the food and bowls, and the food may sit out during the day where children can access it.

We also include pet food recalls in our report because we tend to think differently about our indoor pets compared with outdoor animals.

The number of pet food recalls has nearly doubled in the last two years, with 13 in 2025, up from [seven in 2023](#). The reasons for the recalls in 2025:

- Salmonella - 8
- Salmonella and listeria - 2
- Bird flu - 2
- Plastic in the food - 1

Pathogens can harm pets *and* humans. Pets with Salmonella can be lethargic, have a decreased appetite and vomiting and diarrhea. In addition, pets with Salmonella infections can spread the illness to humans or other animals in the home.

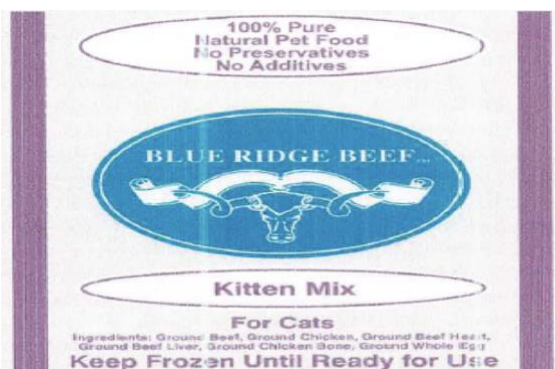
Pets with Listeria can have [mild gastrointestinal signs](#) such as vomiting or diarrhea and spread the illness to others. Bird flu [symptoms include](#) fever, fatigue, decreased appetite, reddened or inflamed eyes, discharge from the eyes and nose, difficulty breathing and neurologic symptoms including tremors and seizures.

In years past, humans have become ill from Salmonella-tainted pet food. You don't have to eat the food to get sick; just touching the pet bowls or food, and then putting your fingers in your mouth can cause infection.

In 2023, for example, one company's pet food led to at least [seven illnesses](#) in humans, including one hospitalization. Six were [babies](#) age 1 or younger. This likely occurred when the babies came in contact with the contaminated dog food or bowls.

Health officials urge pet owners to wash and sanitize pet food bowls, scooping cups and storage containers, and wash their hands well after handling any pet food.

Pet food recalls in 2025:



Blue Ridge Beef – 1,350 lbs. of 2-pound logs of kitten mix

Recall [announced Jan. 3, 2025](#): Salmonella. Sold primarily in Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia.

After a customer complaint of a sick pet on Dec. 12, 2024, the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources sampled the food and it tested positive for Salmonella on Jan. 3, 2025. Blue Ridge recalled the kitten mix the same day.

Blue Ridge Beef – 5,700 lbs. of 2-pound logs natural mix

Recall [announced Jan. 31, 2025](#): Salmonella
Sold in: Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York State, Tennessee, Rhode Island.
The N.C. Department of Agriculture tested samples on Jan. 8, 2025. It tested positive for Salmonella on Jan. 27, 2025. Blue Ridge recalled the mix four days later.



Wild Coast Raw – frozen boneless free range chicken formula raw pet food for cats

Recall [announced March 1, 2025](#): Bird flu.
Distributed to stores in Oregon and Washington state.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture showed the same strain of bird flu in some affected cats and this cat food. This followed a [public health alert](#) about the same brand from the Washington State Department of Agriculture in February.

Savage Pet cat food chicken - large and small boxes

Recall [announced March 15, 2025](#): Bird flu.
Distributed to retailers in: Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Kansas,

Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Savage Pet learned that a cat in Colorado contracted bird flu. Colorado State University Laboratory tested sealed packets of Savage Pet cat food; the results were “non-negative”. The cat food in question was removed from the market while awaiting retesting by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Iowa. Although that testing was negative on March 6, Savage Pet was notified of another kitten that ate that pet food that contracted avian flu. The company opted for a recall.

Supercan Bulk – pig ear silvers-thick cut piggy ear slices pet treats

Recall [announced April 1, 2025](#): Salmonella.
Sold in Washington state.

The Washington state Department of Agriculture tested samples in March; it tested positive for Salmonella.

Blue Ridge Beef – puppy mix and kitten mix -- 1,080 lbs. of 2-pound logs of kitten mix and 1,380 lbs of 2-pound logs of puppy mix

Recall [announced April 11, 2025](#): Salmonella and Listeria

Sold primarily in Connecticut, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York State, Tennessee, Rhode Island, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Due to a customer complaint of animal illness, samples of the products were collected and tested on March 20, 2025 by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. On April 1, the company was notified that the pet food tested positive for Salmonella and Listeria.

Spectrum Brands Pet LLC Tetra ReptoMin 3-In-1 SELECT-A-FOOD reptile food

Recall [announced May 23, 2025](#): Salmonella
Sold online and in stores nationwide including Amazon, Chewy, Meijer, Petco and Walmart.
Internal company testing didn't show Salmonella but a component of the 3-in-1 may contain Salmonella.



Viva Raw LLC ground beef for dogs and ground chicken for dogs and cats – frozen 1-pound bricks

Recall [announced Aug. 25, 2025](#):
Salmonella and Listeria
Sold direct to consumers nationwide and in stores in Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, New York and South Carolina.
The N.C. Department of Agriculture conducted routine testing and discovered the potential for contamination.

Best Buy Bones, Inc. Nature's Own – pet chews bully bites treats

Recall [announced Oct. 3, 2025](#): Salmonella
Sold in Wisconsin.
The FDA tested samples and found

Salmonella. The company stopped production of this product while the investigation continued.

Foodynamics Raw Dog Barkery, BellePepper Cats, Kanu Pets and What's In the Bowl freeze dried pet treats

Recall [announced Oct. 9, 2025](#): Salmonella.
Sold in stores in Florida, New York and Wisconsin.
FDA sampling showed Salmonella. The company stopped production of this product while the investigation continued.

Raw Bistro Pet Fare – frozen beef dog food

Recall [announced Oct. 10, 2025](#): Salmonella
Distributed direct to consumer and to distributors California, Colorado, Illinois and Minnesota.
The FDA tested a sample from a distributor and it showed Salmonella.

Fromm Family Foods Bonnihill Farms – BeefiBowls Beef Recipe gently cooked frozen dog food, 16-ounce chubs – 300 cases

Recall [announcement Dec. 3, 2025](#):
Potential foreign plastic contamination.
Sold in stores in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin and in Ontario, Canada.
The recall followed complaints.

Consumers Supply Distributing, LLC Country Vet, Heartland Harvest – dog biscuits

Recall [announced Dec. 24, 2025](#):
Salmonella.
Sold in stores in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Montana and Nebraska.
Routine FDA testing showed Salmonella contamination.

I FOREIGN MATERIAL (JUNK) FOUND IN FOOD

Life is like a box of chocolates: You never know what you're gonna get. It's the same with food sometimes. If you bought Tony's Choclonely Dark Almond Sea Salt or Everything bars between Feb. 7 and March 24, 2025, you might have gotten [small stones](#).

Then in July, YoCrunch products were [recalled](#) for possibly containing bits of plastic, and – putting the needle and haystack to shame – [wood splinters](#) were found among 58 million pounds of corndogs and sausage on a stick products. At best, that's gross. At worst, that's harmful.

In 2025, at least nine people were injured by junk in their food. Fortunately, no one died.

Foreign material contamination accounted for about 9% of food recalls in 2025, or 28 recalls. That's up from 12 recalls in 2024 and 15 in 2023. With more and more junk ending up in our food, it's important to understand where foreign materials come from and how they end up in our food.

What is foreign material?

The law defines a foreign material “as any non-food, foreign bodies that may cause illness or injury to the consumer and are not typically part of the food,” according to an [article](#) published in the journal Heliyon. So the wooden stick of a corndog, although it isn't food, is okay. A stick is a normal part of a corndog. Wood splinters in the batter are not.

Regulators are specifically concerned with hazardous foreign materials. The distinction between hazardous and non-hazardous is pretty straightforward: Would someone notice the issue before it hurts them?

JUNK FOUND IN 2025

Bone fragments
Cleaning solution
Glass
Metal
Pieces of a pen
Plastic
Small stones
Wood pieces

Someone will probably notice a big machine part in their food before they dig in, for example, but they might not notice [bits of metal in their taquito](#) until they get hurt.

How junk gets into our food

The junk that gets into food is stuff that's abundant where the food is produced. Metal and glass, for example, are everywhere in manufacturing facilities. Small stones, bones and insects are common in agricultural settings. Plastic and wood may be part of the product and packaging.

It's easy to imagine a pen falling onto a production line, which may have been how pieces of pen made their way into these [sausage links](#) recalled in January 2025. One person was injured before the recall.

Leaning agents, too, can pose a risk. These chemicals keep food safe when they're used to clean equipment, but some sodium hypochlorite may have ended up in some containers of [egg substitute](#) in March 2025. In sausage and eggs a la sodium hypochlorite breakfast of champions, it's not a good thing.



PHOTO: Arno Senoner via Unsplash

How is junk kept out of our food?

We can't discern how things went wrong in each of these 28 cases, just that they did. Even when manufacturers take care of their machinery and have good quality assurance practices, mistakes happen.

Fortunately, there are [numerous tools](#) that manufacturers often use to try to keep our food safe, including magnets, screens/sieves and optical and laser sorters.

- Sieves, sifters and screens: these tools work by filtering out solids from liquids, like a coffee filter or pasta strainer. They're very efficient, but can become a source of contamination if not maintained.
- Magnets: Magnets can be used to efficiently pull metal out of food. They can also be used at high temperatures. The downside is that magnets don't work on all kinds of metals.
- Optical sorters: Optical sorting machines use cameras and lasers to detect surface-level contamination. When junk is spotted, it's removed with a vacuum-like device or a mechanical tool.

What should you do if you find junk in your food?

If you find something in your food that shouldn't be there, it's good to notify both the manufacturer and the [USDA](#), which inspects poultry, meat and eggs, or the [FDA](#), which oversees everything else. Or contact your local health department.

A good place to start with notifying the manufacturer: its customer service office.



PHOTO: Mark Stebnicki via Pexels

I RADIOACTIVITY IN FOOD

In early August 2025, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) [detected](#) the radionuclide Cesium-137 (Cs-137) in some shipments of frozen shrimp from BMS Foods of Indonesia.

[Cs-137](#) is a radioactive form of the element cesium, which is “one of the byproducts of nuclear fission processes in nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons testing.” It is present in our natural environment in small quantities due to weapons testing and nuclear reactor explosions in the 20th century. In large doses, it can cause “burns, acute radiation sickness and even death,” according to the [CDC](#). It can also cause cancer if a person has long-term exposure, even at a low dosage.

The primary concern that led to this [public advisory](#) was the cancer risk of low-level exposure, as the shrimp was “below FDA’s derived intervention level for Cs-137.” The FDA denied entry to the shipment and issued a notice recommending companies recall frozen shrimp products purchased from this supplier,. This led to 12 separate frozen shrimp recall announcements in the following months.

The FDA on Aug. 19, 2025 offered an explanation about how the shrimp got contaminated: the product was “prepared, packed, or held under insanitary conditions.” Testing has not confirmed the presence of radiation in any products in stores.

As this is an ongoing investigation, the FDA may update the [recall list](#). Here is the full list of as of Jan. 1, 2026:



- * Southwind Foods: [Sand Bar/Arctic Shores/Best Yet/Great American/First Street](#)
- * Beaver Street Fisheries: [Great Value Frozen Raw Shrimp EZ-Peel](#)
- * AquaStar (USA) Corp: [Kroger Mercado Cooked Medium Peeled Tail-Off Shrimp](#)
- * AquaStar (USA) Corp: [Aqua Star Cocktail Shrimp](#)
- * Updated: Southwind Foods: [Sand Bar/Arctic Shores/Best Yet/Great American/First Street](#)
- * AquaStar (USA) Corp: [Kroger, Kroger Mercado, AquaStar Raw Shrimp, Cooked Shrimp, Shrimp Skewers](#)
- * Lawrence Wholesale: [Kroger bagged frozen shrimp](#)
- * Updated: Southwind Foods: [Sand Bar/Arctic Shores/ Best Yet/ Great American/First Street](#)
- * AquaStar (USA) Corp: [AquaStar Raw Peeled Tail-on Shrimp Skewers](#)
- * Sea Port Products Corp: [Sea Port Raw Frozen Easy Peel White Shrimp](#)
- * AquaStar (USA) Corp: [AquaStar, Best Yet, Waterfront Bistro, Publix Frozen Raw Shrimp](#)
- * Direct Source Seafood LLC: [Market 32 and Waterfront Bistro Frozen Raw Shrimp](#)

I NEWS OF THE WEIRD

There was some weird food safety news in 2025. Here are some highlights (or lowlights):

Not a healthy breakfast

Prairie Farms [recalled](#) about 320 gallons of fat-free milk after finding it may have been contaminated with a cleaning solution. But the company didn't just recall just any gallons of milk, only the ones labeled between 5:51 p.m. and 9:23 p.m. on the day of their production.

Cargill Kitchen Solutions [recalled](#) more than 200,000 pounds of egg substitute, also over concerns that it could have been contaminated with a cleaning solution.



DJ's Boudain LLC [recalled](#) more than 17,000 pounds of sausage links that might have had bits of a pen in them.

Radioactive shrimp

In August 2025, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection [found](#) Cesium-137 (Cs-137), a radioactive contaminant, in some shipments of frozen shrimp. It's normal to find Cs-137 in nuclear reactors and nuclear fallout, according to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) – but obviously not in our food.

DID YOU KNOW RODENT HAIRS AND INSECTS ARE PERMITTED IN FOOD?

The FDA doesn't object to certain levels of contamination making their way into our food. Here are some shocking highlights about [what levels are allowed](#) before the FDA takes action:

Apple butter:

Can have up to a 12% mold count, four rodent hairs per 100 grams, and an average of five whole or “equivalent insects (not counting mites, aphids, thrips, or scale insects) per 100 grams”.

Chocolate:

Can have up to an average of 60 insect fragments per 100 grams of chocolate.

Coffee:

Up to 10% by count on average can be insect-infested or moldy.

Macaroni and noodle products:

Can have up to an average of 4.5 rodent hairs per 225 grams or up to an average of 225 insect fragments per 225 grams.

I RECALLED COOKWARE

The FDA announced more than 20 unusual recalls and warnings in 2025: For pots and pans.

The concern: The cookware may be contaminated with lead, which can leach into food being cooked. The problem isn't in the food; it's in what's being used to prepare the food.

The FDA and various states have been [testing](#) some imported cookware that's made of aluminum, brass and aluminum alloys known as Hindalium/Hindolium or Indalium/Indolium.

How does lead in cookware leach into food? When lead in the pan's surface releases into the food you're cooking and dissolves into your food. The lead is tiny and invisible and undetectable.



Lead is toxic. When it builds up inside someone, it can cause problems. Ingestion of lead [can seriously harm people](#), particularly young children (who can suffer significant developmental and neurological problems), women of child-bearing age and women who are breastfeeding (who in both cases can suffer problems during pregnancy or harm their babies).

Lead in pans can leach into food when it releases as you're cooking.

Adults can develop high blood pressure, cardiovascular problems and kidney damage.

In one of the cookware recalls, [Town Food Service Equipment Co.](#), Inc. of Brooklyn, N.Y. recalled four sizes of aluminum saucepans on Dec. 12. The announcement noted that, "Lead is toxic to humans and can affect people of any age or health status, and there is no known safe level of exposure to lead. Even low levels of lead exposure can cause serious health problems, particularly in children and fetuses."

The announcement added that children with exposure to low levels of lead can suffer from learning problems, low IQ and changes in behavior.

The pans were sold in three dozen states from Jan. 1, 2023 to Nov. 30, 2025. They came in sizes 1 quart, 1-½ quarts, 2 quarts and 3 quarts.

The company stopped production of the pans while the investigation continues. No illnesses have been reported in connection with this product.

In another recall, [Shata Traders Inc.](#) of Brooklyn, N.Y., recalled its 24-cm Majestic Chef pans on Nov. 19, 2025. The pans were distributed in New York and five other states.

With 10 other products, [the FDA said](#) the companies agreed to or initiated a recall. But the FDA announcement didn't link to any of these 10 recall notices and none have been posted to the FDA site as of Jan. 8, 2026. (See the [complete list here](#).)

This isn't the first time the FDA has flagged cookware over lead leaching concerns. Back in 2022, the FDA issued an [import alert](#) for cookware manufactured by Rashko Baba Co. Ltd., to stop additional sales into the United States. This alert followed [information provided by](#) Public Health – Seattle & King County, the public health department in King County, Wash.

The FDA recommends that:

- Consumers check their kitchens for any of the [cookware](#) identified by the FDA as potentially dangerous. People should not donate or refurbish any of the identified cookware.
- Retailers and distributors remember they are required to make sure that cookware they sell comply with [FDA regulations](#).



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I CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When we have thousands of people getting sick every year from contaminated food, we should think hard about what else can be done. We need to stop contaminated food from being sold, identify issues more quickly when something does slip through and warn consumers when contaminated food makes it to store shelves.

A recurring issue in Food For Thought 2026: Not knowing what's in our food – whether that's unexpected allergens, pathogens or junk. Unfortunately, there's often not much that individual consumers can do to protect themselves from issues that haven't yet been identified. In a grocery store, adulterated food products are often indistinguishable from unadulterated ones. There are ways to address the problems of foodborne illness, junk in our food, and undeclared allergens.

1. The FDA should move up the compliance deadline for the [Food Traceability Rule](#). This rule was originally published on [Nov. 21, 2022](#) with a compliance deadline of Jan. 20, 2026. Then in 2025, this deadline was [delayed](#) until July 20, 2028.

Half of the products that caused a cascade of other recalls in 2025 were on the [Food Traceability List](#). Were the subsequent problems discovered and the recalls announced as quickly as they might have been if the Food Traceability Rule had been in effect? Could some illnesses have been prevented? Perhaps. The FDA approved this rule for a reason. It shouldn't be delayed for two more years.

The largest cascading recall of 2025, [whole cucumbers](#), is an example of a food that the

food traceability record-keeping would track. The first recall in this cascade was on [May 19](#). The last four recalls were announced from May 23 to June 4 – four to 16 days later. The incubation period for Salmonella is typically 12 to 36 hours. Increased food traceability records, like the ones that the Food Traceability Rule would require, could close the period between the first and last cascading recall and result in fewer people getting sick.

2. Regulators should track and monitor companies and factories that were previously contaminated with foodborne bacteria. For example, the Fresh & Ready Listeria [outbreak](#), which was connected to 10 hospitalizations and one death in 2025, was linked to a facility that had previously tested positive for Listeria in 2017, as noted in the FDA's [warning letter](#).

The first case in the recent outbreak occurred on [Dec. 3, 2023](#), yet the ready-to-eat products were not recalled until [May 10, 2025](#). The recall stemmed from an FDA inspection that found Listeria contamination. According to the FDA [warning letter](#), “the inspection was initiated as part of a multistate foodborne outbreak investigation.” If there were frequent re-inspections of facilities with a history of bacteria contamination, perhaps this problem could have been traced to Fresh & Ready Foods sooner, instead of regulators waiting until another outbreak. And maybe sicknesses could have been prevented.

3. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has audited both the [FDA](#)'s and [USDA](#)'s implementation of food safety regulations and found them lacking. For example, under the Food Safety

Modernization Act (FSMA), the FDA, which regulates 80% of the U.S. food supply, is expected to inspect “each high-risk domestic food facility” at least once every three years. Every non-high-risk facility is supposed to be inspected at least once every five years.

The GAO’s analysis of FDA data shows that FDA did not inspect about [7% of high-risk domestic facilities](#) due for inspection during fiscal year 2019. The percentage not inspected increased to [more than 40%](#) in fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

Overall, the GAO said “the fragmented nature of the federal food safety oversight system causes inconsistent oversight, ineffective coordination, and inefficient use of resources. Since 2007, we have identified federal oversight of food safety as a high-risk issue and made several recommendations and matters for congressional consideration.

“In 2017, we called for the Executive Office of the President to develop and implement a national strategy for overseeing food safety. As of January 2025, there were no plans to create a national strategy, according to officials from the Office of Management and Budget,” the GOA said.

The GAO found there are other things the FDA needs to do to [fully implement the Food Safety Modernization Act](#) (FSMA), which was enacted in 2011.

The GAO’s [audit](#) of the USDA found the agency has primarily focused on Salmonella contamination. The [CDC estimates](#) that it infects 1.35 million people every year. Still, Salmonella is not the only foodborne illness. The GAO recommends the USDA expand its focus, starting with *Campylobacter*.

4. There are steps that more manufacturers could take to reduce instances of physical contamination, outlined this [article](#) in the journal Heliyon. For starters, there are many tools available that can detect and remove foreign materials from food during processing and production.

5. One of the strange things about undeclared allergens being the largest reason for recalls is that properly declaring allergens is, on its face, a simple process. Manufacturers should know what they’re putting in their food and should retrieve ingredient lists from suppliers, which is especially important when suppliers or recipes change. Any allergens and allergen-like ingredients present in the food should be disclosed as [required by law](#). If there’s any uncertainty about the presence of an allergen, such as from cross contamination, manufacturers can simply state that the product “may contain” or was “produced in a facility that also processes” a particular allergen.

6. The FDA and USDA should develop a way for consumers and businesses to opt in and receive direct email, text or phone alerts of all Class I recalls and any allergens of concern. Products with undeclared allergens such as milk, peanuts or wheat comprised 39% all recalls in 2025. Allergies to one or more foods affect [8% of children and nearly 11 percent of adults nationwide](#).

7. The FDA and USDA should revamp their alert process so people could opt to be notified about specific categories of recalls and alerts, instead of all of them. The FDA and USDA together post an average of a half-dozen recalls a week. Many aren’t a huge risk to most people.

Yes, you can sign up for email alerts from the FDA and USDA – for *every* food recall.

If someone were to get email or text alerts about every single recall – one almost every day on average – they’d likely suffer from what experts call “recall fatigue.” Many consumers would become numb and stop noticing or would get annoyed by all of the alerts and stop reading them.

Maybe someone wants to be alerted only to foods recalled because of undeclared nuts or wheat or soy. Maybe someone wants to be notified only about issues with pet food. Perhaps most people want to be notified only about recalls involving pathogens; these comprised 34% of recalls in 2025.

An even better idea: It’d be great if the two regulators created an app that works like the Food Recalls app by SmartAddress Inc. for [iPhones](#) or [Androids](#). Users can choose to get real-time alerts for severe problems identified by FDA and USDA that have already made people sick, or microbes including Salmonella and Listeria, or just for pet food, or for all food and beverage recalls through the FDA and USDA. If you don’t want real-time notifications, you can silence them and just check the app once a day or once a week or whenever you’d like.

8. A separate idea that we probably will see at some point: Food producers could leverage technology so consumers can easily learn whether an item in their home has been recalled. Currently, consumers can use an app such as [FoodSwitch](#) or [Yuka](#) to scan the barcodes for many food items and find out their nutritional value and what’s in the item.

What if every food product contained a QR code, for example, so you could scan it with your phone and find out about any recalls in real time.

This would also help address the issue of recalled foods at food pantries and soup kitchens. They don’t have the computer systems a grocery store has, so volunteers have to go through products by hand to find recalled items.

9. Companies conducting a recall should be required to try to reach out to consumers directly, not just notify the FDA or USDA and issue a news release to alert their distributors. Many food manufacturers sure spend a lot of money to market their products to us. How about if they spend the same amount that was spent to sell us the product to inform us that it’s been recalled?

10. In addition, retailers should offer shoppers a way to be contacted by phone, text or email in case of recalls involving items they bought, whether that’s through a loyalty card or some other system. Retailers are inconsistent here.

11. Consumers should do more to be informed, particularly if their home includes people with severe food allergies, or young children, senior citizens, pregnant women or others who are medically more vulnerable to foodborne illness. Consumers should be proactive to make sure they have multiple ways to find out about recalls through their grocers, free apps, government alerts and news alerts.

I TIPS FOR CONSUMERS

We see hundreds of food recalls every year. Many lead to illnesses. Some are quite serious. Some lead to people being hospitalized or even dying.

Yes, the notification system for food recalls needs to get better. Until improvements are made, and maybe even after that happens, consumers should consider what they can do to help protect themselves and their families.

- Stop by the customer service desk of the grocery stores you shop at and ask how they notify customers of recalls.
- Sign up with any grocery store you shop at regularly to be notified by phone, text or email if an item you purchased has been recalled. Chances are high that the store will find out about a recall before government regulators will issue any announcements. You should check for messages on the email or phone number the grocery store has for you at least once a day.
- Consider shopping only at stores with a good recall notification policy, especially if you buy many products that are frequently recalled, such as produce, or if someone in your home has severe food allergies.
- Remember that harmful bacteria on or in food often can be killed by cooking it thoroughly. But you still shouldn't use recalled food just because you're cooking it. Also, rinsing produce is important for other reasons, but it won't kill bacteria such as Salmonella or E. coli.
- Make a plan for how you will stay informed about food recalls. Getting real-time alerts is especially important if there are people with severe allergies, or kids, pregnant women, elderly folks or people with compromised immune systems in the home. You can:

** Sign up for recall alerts from the [Food and Drug Administration](#) and the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#).

** Regularly check for food recalls announced by the [FDA](#) and [USDA](#). Once a week is good for most cases; once a day is better.

** Get the free Food Recalls & Alerts app by SmartAddress Inc. for [iPhones](#) or [Androids](#). Users can choose to get real-time alerts for all food and beverage

recalls through the FDA and USDA, or just those for severe problems identified by FDA and USDA that have already made people sick, or just for microbes including Salmonella and Listeria, or just for pet food. If you don't want notifications on your phone, you can silence them and check the app once a day or whenever you'd like.

Pro Tip: This app now pushes consumers to pay for a subscription (\$34.99 a year,) but the alerts to your phone with a photo of the product are still free. If you get a notification for a specific product that concerns you, you can always do your own online search independent of the app.

** If you don't want to sign up for all food recalls, but perhaps just those involving Listeria, Salmonella or E. coli, or certain undeclared allergens (like peanuts or wheat), then, with your favorite search engine, set up news alerts with those keywords to be delivered to your email daily or in real time.

** If you have social media accounts, you can follow the agencies. On Twitter/X accounts: @FDArecalls and @USDAFoodSafety.

** Pay attention to some type of national news, whether it's a TV broadcast, a newspaper or an email summary of the day's headlines. Major recalls generally hit the news, but not all that might affect you will be covered.

- If you suffer from food allergies, make a list of allergy-friendly food companies so you know who it's safe to buy from. And read the ingredients of every product, even ones you regularly buy. Manufacturers can change their recipes and practices.

Our complete consumer guide: [How to find out about food recalls](#)

I METHODOLOGY

U.S. PIRG Education Fund accessed the public databases for recalls and public health alerts for food and beverage products and dietary supplements for 2025 from the [U.S. Food & Drug Administration](#) and the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)'s Food Safety and Inspection Service during December 2025 and the first week of January 2026. The numbers for 2017 through 2024 come from our previous analyses and [Food for Thought reports](#).

We included all levels of recalls (Class I, II and III), which are categorized according to their health threat, and all public health alerts provided by the regulators.

Recalls and alerts both are warnings that specific food shouldn't be consumed; alerts are issued instead of recalls when the company hasn't recalled it, or when the product is no longer for sale but may still be in consumers' or restaurants' pantries, freezers or refrigerators. The [majority](#) of publicly released food recalls are Class I, the most serious and biggest health risk. The classes are [explained here](#).

For both FDA and USDA recall announcements, the regulators sometimes cite more than one concern about the product. It could be that it wasn't inspected *and* testing showed possible harmful bacteria. Or it could be the food may contain undisclosed milk and also contain undisclosed wheat – each an allergen that must be declared on the label and cause the product to be recalled if they're not disclosed. We counted each announcement only once.

Other parts of our methodology:

- The [CDC lists](#) 11 foodborne outbreaks for 2025, which includes only those with a product identified and recalled. In some cases, illnesses and deaths may have occurred in connection with the same products sold under different brands, such as cucumbers or prepared pasta meals. For this report, we looked at all outbreaks, including those without a food type or recall listed.

The FDA lists 22 closed outbreak investigations in 2025, and an additional five [active](#) outbreak investigations started in 2025 that were still active as of Jan. 27, 2026. We're including one FDA outbreak for [frozen shakes](#) in the 2025 closed investigations, even though it is in the 2024 section on the FDA website. The outbreak was reopened in 2024, according to the [FDA](#), but the reopening wasn't announced until [Feb. 24, 2025](#). Also, frozen shakes outbreak is classified as a 2025 outbreak in the CDC [list](#). The CDC lists one additional [open outbreak](#)

started in 2025, for [raw oysters](#), that we are counting towards the total number of outbreak investigations, for a total of 28.

The FDA's outbreak list on its website is a living document, constantly being updated and added to. With this in mind, the data collection for outbreak information for this report ended Jan. 27, 2026 at 9 am ET. Any updates after this time to open or closed cases are not reflected in our data analysis. The site is recorded in a [web archive](#) that reflects what it looked like when we collected the data.

- The FDA has multiple categories for recalls because it regulates drugs, medical devices and other products besides food. We considered all recalls categorized as "Food & Beverages."
- The FDA lists 13 pet food recalls for 2025. Some are categorized as "Food & Beverages," "Foodborne Illness" or "Pet Food," or some combination of those. Others are under the category of "Animal & Veterinary." We counted any recalls for indoor pets as food recalls. We did not count any recalls for food for livestock or farm animals in this report.

We included pet food in our analysis for two reasons: First, many people consider their pets part of their family.

Second, pet food recalls can be significant for humans when, for example, Salmonella is the concern. If someone [touches dog food](#) contaminated by Salmonella, and then puts their fingers in their mouth or eats something they touched without washing their hands, it's possible to contract Salmonella/Salmonellosis. We didn't see any illnesses among humans caused by pet food in 2025. This did occur with one pet food recall in 2023 when [one company's pet food](#) recall led to seven illnesses in humans. Six of those sickened were babies age 1 or younger. This likely occurred when the babies came in contact with the contaminated dog food or bowls.

Some recalls under "Animal & Veterinary" are for injections or medication. We didn't include any of these in our analysis.

- Similarly, the FDA sometimes categorizes dietary supplements as "Food & Beverages," and sometimes categorizes them as "Dietary Supplements." We tallied supplements containing dietary ingredients, as defined by [Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act \(DSHEA\) of 1994](#), that seem to be aimed

at improving well-being, but we didn't count those functioning as drugs aimed at, for example, pain relief or male enhancement. This is also the criteria that the FDA is supposed to use. Because of this discrepancy, some of the products we call dietary supplements for this report may not be classified as such by the FDA.

Under the 1994 law, "dietary ingredients" include vitamins, minerals, herbs and extracts, among other ingredients. The FDA's [detailed explanation is here](#).

We evaluated which recall announcements to exclude on a product-by-product basis. Quite simply, regulators sometimes make mistakes on classifications. For example, [GreenWise](#) pear, kiwi, spinach and pea baby food, recalled in May 2025, was classified as a dietary supplement first. It's baby food – clearly a food.

- The FDA listed major recalls for cooking pans as a food and beverage. The pans were recalled in [November](#) and [December](#) 2025 because they can leach lead into food. With 10 other products, [the FDA said](#) the companies agreed to or initiated a recall. But the FDA announcement didn't link to any of these 10 recall notices and none have been posted to the FDA site as of Jan. 8, 2026.

We didn't count these as food and beverage recalls but wrote a separate chapter on the issue because the announcements were among more than 20 recalls and warnings for pots and pans in 2025.

- When calculating the number of cascading recalls in 2025, we counted the original recall of the ingredient product and every subsequent recall.

If a recall was updated or edited later to add more products, this was mentioned, but not factored into the overall announcement number. Only recalls that explicitly mentioned a connection to a previous recall were considered cascading recalls, because their connection could be proven. Therefore, there could be cascading recalls in the FDA or USDA lists that were not counted towards our total for the year because they were not explicit enough in their recall announcement. We tallied 10 original recalls that led to 31 more.

- For the very last recall announcement of 2025, [Gold Star Distribution Inc., Issues Recall of Certain FDA-Regulated Products in Three States Including Drugs, Devices, Cosmetics, Human Foods, and Pet Foods](#), we counted it as one announcement and did not count it as separate recalls for any products. The list of [more than 1,000 FDA-regulated products](#) including "drugs, medical devices, cosmetics, dietary supplements, human food and pet food."

The Dec. 26 recall included “all products stored” in a particular distribution facility because of “potential Salmonella contamination, presence of rodent and avian contamination and insanitary conditions during the storage process.” The products were distributed to dozens of stores, restaurants and other businesses.

- Among the announcements in the FDA download, we found two duplicates, with each notice posted separately on two different days in different languages. A recall for celery sticks and a recall was posted in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). A recall for cheese was also posted in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). We did not count the duplicates in our totals.

[Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc. Emite Aviso Para 1.587 Cajas de Marketside 4in/1.6 oz Bundle Pack por Posible Riesgo Para la Salud Celery Sticks | FDA](#)

[Quesito El Establo Retira Del Mercado Queso \(Quesito Colombiano\) Debido a Posible Riesgo Para La Salud | FDA](#)

fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts

04/11/2025	Marketside	Celery Sticks	Food & Beverages, Foodborne Illness, Produce	Due to possibility of contamination with Listeria monocytogenes.	Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.
04/10/2025	Marketside	Celery Sticks	Food & Beverages, Foodborne Illness, Produce	Due to possibility of contamination with Listeria monocytogenes.	Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.

fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts

08/13/2025	Quesito El Establo	Spanish Cheese (Quesito Colombiano)	Food & Beverages, Foodborne Illness, Cheese/Cheese Product	Due to the presence of rodent, rodent activity, and other insanitary conditions during the manufacturing and storage process	Quesito El Establo
08/12/2025	Quesito El Establo	Spanish Cheese (Quesito Colombiano)	Food & Beverages, Foodborne Illness, Cheese/Cheese Product	Due to the presence of rodent, rodent activity, and other insanitary conditions during the manufacturing and storage process	Quesito El Establo