

Join Us! New membership options for the Allergen Bureau

The Food Safety Centre Allergen Bureau has recently entered its third successful year.

During the last year, the Allergen Bureau Management Committee has worked hard to raise the profile of the Allergen Bureau amongst industry and other key stakeholders and to develop and enhance the benefits enjoyed by Allergen Bureau Member companies.

In response to discussions with industry, an additional level of membership is now available to accommodate those smaller companies in the Australian and New Zealand food industry who wish to gain closer association with the Allergen Bureau. This "Associate Membership" has a three-tier fee structure, based on the number of employees the company has.

Membership Investments are now structured as follows:

Full Membership: \$5,500

Associate Membership:

- Less than 10 full-time employees \$550
- 10 to 50 full-time employees \$1,100
- 51 to 100 full-time employees \$3,300

A flier accompanying this issue of eNews provides an outline of the respective benefits for the two membership levels. You will also find attached an Expression of Interest form that can be returned to us to secure your place as a recognised leader in this field.

[Join Us](#) and share the benefits of an industry approach to improving the management of food allergens.

Revised AFGC Guidelines for Allergen Management and Labelling

The Revised AFGC Guidelines for Allergen Management and Labelling were drafted earlier this year to incorporate the wealth of allergen management information now held by the Australasian food industry.

A draft of the Revised Guide was made publicly available for review during the 2007 Allergen Bureau Conferences and Workshops held in February, as well as at the joint NZFSA/NZIFST Food Allergen Seminar in March. The draft was also made available via the AFGC and Allergen Bureau websites, with submissions requested by the end of March.

The Allergen Forum Team working on this project received 15 detailed submissions as formal responses to the consultation document, as well as comments provided in the workshops conducted in February and March. The team has since taken these submissions into account in preparing the final Revised Guide.

The document is now in the process of being printed and it is expected to be available and officially launched in late May. The Guide will also be available on the Allergen Bureau website.

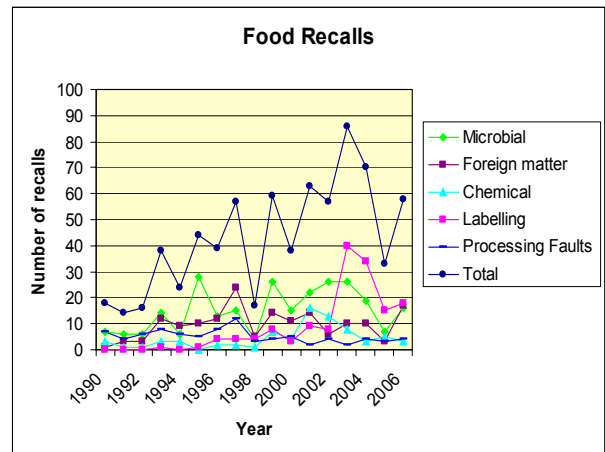
Food Recalls – improving the situation

The average cost to manufacturers and retailers for conducting a food recall is estimated to be around A\$100,000 each recall, with some recalls costing much more than this.

This estimate does not take into account the losses in future sales due to lost consumer confidence and risk of losing market share.

As highlighted in the graph below, the number of food recalls conducted in Australia rose throughout the 1990s, reaching a peak in 2003. In 2003 and 2004, three

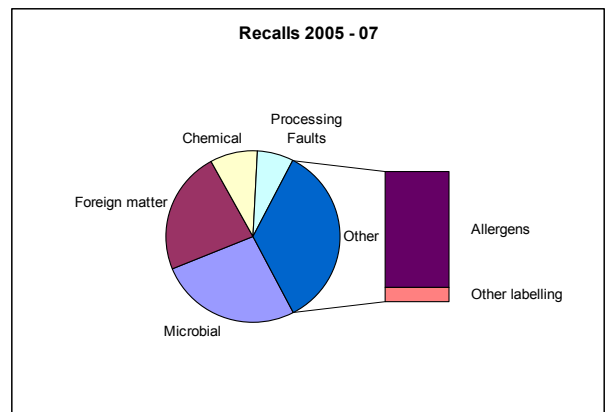
quarters of the recalls were due to labelling errors or microbial contamination. In 2004 and 2005 there was a reduction in the number of recalls. In 2006, the total number of recalls once again reached the higher numbers comparable to those in 2001-02, with the presence of foreign matter, bacterial



contamination and labelling errors accounting for 76% of all recalls.

More recently, over the period from January 2005 to March 2007, 35% of recalls have been due to labelling errors.

This is the largest category for recalls, exceeding bacterial contamination (26%) and foreign matter (23%). As depicted in the pie chart, during this period there were 32 recalls for undeclared food allergens, making up 89% of the labelling related recalls.



The combined expense of these recalls potentially cost industry around \$3.2 million.

The revised AFGC Allergen Management and Labelling guide, which incorporates a standardised supplier information form for ingredients, recommendations on good manufacturing practices, labelling recommendations and a scientifically-based risk assessment process, aims to dramatically reduce these recalls and improve consumer trust in the food industry.

This article has been kindly provided by Mr Kim Leighton, Australian Food and Grocery Council.

AFGC Allergen Communication Strategy

The Allergen Forum Communication Working Group is currently developing a strategy to ensure all key stakeholders are aware of the benefits they will receive following the launch and implementation of the revised AFGC Guide to Allergen Management and Labelling.

A large part of the strategy will be to offer a means by which industry can learn more about the tools within the guide as well as how to incorporate them into their own allergen management program.

As an initial step, a practical workshop on *Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling (VITAL)* is being held in Melbourne on 30th May.

Kirsten Grinter from Nestle and Lyn Davies from AgriQuality will demonstrate the use of the AFGC Allergen Forum's VITAL tool, which has been specifically designed for addressing allergens *not* formulated into your products. By providing a detailed explanation of the procedure and incorporating worked examples, this workshop will give you a real advantage in managing the allergen risks in your facility using VITAL.

As VITAL is designed to be used in conjunction with the AFGC Allergen Forum's Recommended Labelling Format and Product Information Form (PIF), discussion of these will also form an integral part of the workshop.

More information and a registration form for this workshop can be found on the [Allergen Bureau website](#)

Do fining agents in wine cause allergic reactions?

Products derived from eggs, milk, and fish are frequently used as fining agents in wines to remove impurities and improve product clarity.

While the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code requires declaration of these processing aids when they are used in a product, much research has been applied to determining whether the level of these potential allergens remaining in the wine at the point of consumption could invoke an allergic reaction in a sensitised individual.

In an article published this month, scientists at the University of Hamburg in Germany used enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) to examine various German wines for their levels of various fining agents. Their findings indicate that of those they tested, residues of lysozyme and dried egg white (both derived from egg whites) were the only ones that could be detected in the finished wine product.

For those two products, the authors could not exclude adverse reactions towards these residues in treated wines.

Article reference: Weber P, Steinhart H, Paschke A 2007. Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry "Investigation of the Allergenic Potential of Wines Fined with Various Proteinogenic Fining Agents by ELISA" Vol 18;55(8):3127-33.

Request for resources

As the Allergen Bureau continues to develop the website, we are working to increase the number and type of resources available to the industry.

To ensure the Allergen Bureau remains a valuable asset to industry, we therefore ask you to be our eyes and ears, to provide papers, events, reviews, website links and other useful information for us to post on the website.

The website is updated fortnightly, and all contributions and feedback will be gratefully received.

Allergic reaction believed to have caused teenage death

Tragically, another young Australian with peanut allergy has reportedly succumbed to this condition.

According to an article in the Herald Sun, an investigation has been launched into the death of the Scotch College student who died of a suspected allergic reaction to peanuts.

The 13-year-old Melbourne boy, Nathan Francis, was on a school army cadet camp in the Wombat State Forest north of Ballan when he became ill after reportedly eating peanuts.

The article maintains that staff on the hiking trip administered first aid as the boy went into suspected anaphylactic shock on 30 March. He was flown to the Royal Children's Hospital but died shortly after arrival.

The latest death came at the same time the coronial inquest began into the death of Victorian boy Alex Baptist. A report in The Age says the four-year-old, from the Melbourne suburb of Mentone, was known to suffer an allergy to peanuts collapsed and died at his kindergarten after eating morning tea there in September 2004.

His parents were granted an inquest into his death after months of campaigning, including a petition containing almost 4500 signatures, amid concerns from other parents with children who have allergies.

The Age reported that the preschool told Alex's parents that he was fed only fruit on the day of his death and did not come into contact with peanuts. Furthermore, an EpiPen, a device that delivers adrenaline in the event of a severe allergic reaction, was apparently mistakenly jabbed into a staff member's finger in the rush to revive Alex. Mrs Baptist reportedly told the Coroners Court hearing that she became aware months after the death that there was another EpiPen at the preschool but it was not used.

According to The Age, the inquest will resume on 7 May.

Allergy Awareness Week 6 - 12th May 2007

Education and support are critical in the management of allergic conditions, especially those that are potentially life-threatening.

For more information about the events within Allergy Awareness week, contact Anaphylaxis Australia Inc at www.allergyfacts.org.au

In 2007, Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Awareness Week (FAAAW) runs from the 6th to the 12th May.

The number of Australians with serious allergies to common foods such as peanut, milk, egg and shellfish continues to grow at an increasing rate.

Anaphylaxis Australia Inc (AAI) is working to increase community and government awareness of anaphylaxis as an important public health issue just like asthma and diabetes. Awareness campaigns and education will encourage the wider community to do what they can to help keep those with severe food allergy as safe as possible.

"State and Federal government needs to acknowledge the increase in prevalence of severe food allergy and allocate more resources to the recognition, management and emergency treatment of food anaphylaxis. Increased allergy services in each and every state and territory are desperately required. Increased support from the government will make a difference" says the president of AAI, Maria Said.

To start Allergy Awareness Week, a seminar on Anaphylaxis and Allergy will be held on 7th May in Adelaide. This will provide useful information to those who want to know more about the management of severe allergy and anaphylaxis.