



Dean A. Lerner, Director

Reducing the Risk of *E. coli* from Apple Cider

AMES, Iowa (October 20, 2009) – Cool fall weather puts many people in the mood for apple cider – and potentially at risk for *E. coli*. There have been several outbreaks of *E. coli* among school children who visit apple orchards where they drink unpasteurized cider.

The Iowa Food Safety Task Force would like to remind orchard operators who produce cider of the potential risk of *E. coli* and other foodborne illness when processing raw apple cider. Improper handling of apples during the cider making process may be putting consumers at risk.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that pre-packaged juice products – including fresh apple cider – that are not pasteurized must bear a warning label advising the consumer that the product has not been processed to prevent, reduce, or eliminate the presence of pathogens. Fresh, unpasteurized apple cider should not be served to at-risk populations, which include children younger than 9 years old, the elderly, and individuals with compromised immune systems, the Task Force stressed.

To avoid *E. coli* and other foodborne contaminants, it is recommended that cider producers practice the following food safety guidelines:

- Apple cider should be made from whole, sound apples that have not been dropped or found on the ground.
- Cider presses and all equipment should be clean and sanitary before being used.
- All storage bottles should be clean and sanitary.
- Cider should be kept refrigerated at 40° F or cooler.

If carefully followed by cider producers, these measures will reduce the risk of transmitting *E. coli* and other bacterial pathogens. Pasteurization, however, would reduce the risk to nearly zero. Apple cider producers who process their own pasteurized cider must have an approved Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan in place.

Once apples – or any vegetables – are contaminated, it is very difficult to remove all of the illness causing bacteria from the product.

The Iowa Food Safety Task Force is composed of representatives from regulatory agencies, commodity organizations, and academic institutions. The work of the Task Force is funded through a grant from the FDA. For more information about the safe processing of apple cider, please contact Dr. Sam Beattie, Assistant Professor of Food Science & Human Nutrition at Iowa State University. Dr. Beattie can be contacted by telephone at (515) 294-3357, or by e-mail at beatties@iastate.edu.