

# NEWS



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## Public Health investigation

### **MEDIA UPDATE**

June 21, 2017

#### **Public Health investigation indicates foodborne cause of illness**

GARFIELD COUNTY, CO – THIS IS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATING TO THE INITIAL PRESS RELEASE ON A PUBLIC HEALTH INVESTIGATION OF A DISEASE OUTBREAK THIS MONTH:

Approximately eighty people reported becoming ill after attending the Rifle Rodeo, a privately-organized event at the Garfield County Fairgrounds Monday, June 5. Public Health has received confirmation of the cause of illness from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment lab.

Lab samples sent to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment came back positive for *Clostridium perfringens* – a leading cause of foodborne illness. The illness is contracted from consuming large amounts of the bacteria, creating a toxin in the intestinal tract causing abdominal cramps and diarrhea. For most people, the illness resolves in about 24 hours. Complications from *C. perfringens* occur when food is left at an unsafe temperature, and bacteria multiply in the food prior to consumption.

Case interviews of rodeo attendees linked the source of the illness to food served by an unlicensed vendor at the event.

"The Rifle Rodeo is a privately-organized event. It should be noted that this particular food vendor has a primary location that has been inspected, is licensed and is regulated. In the case of the Rifle Rodeo, temporary event and coordinator permits were not submitted, therefore Garfield County Public Health was not aware of or able to inspect food at the event prior to the June 5 outbreak," said Yvonne Long, Executive Director, Garfield County Public Health.

If a vendor fails to pull required permits, has an outbreak, or has areas of improvement noted on a health inspection, local health delivers written notification and works with the entity on safety regulations.

Garfield County and the state health department have had nurses, licensed food inspectors, regional and state epidemiologists, and laboratory staff working on this case for the past two weeks.

"One thing that we want the public to know is that for public events it is the coordinator's responsibility to find out and comply with the rules, regulations, permits, sales tax requirements and licenses required to host an event," continued Long.

For questions about consumer safety and regulations, please contact Garfield County Environmental Health at 970-625-5200.

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## **MEDIA UPDATE**

June 9, 2017

THIS IS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATING TO THE PRESS INITIAL RELEASE ON A PUBLIC HEALTH INVESTIGATION OF A DISEASE OUTBREAK THIS WEEK:

Due to the short onset and short duration of the illnesses reported to Public Health staff following a privately organized event at the fairgrounds, it has been determined the reported illnesses did NOT develop from a waterborne issue, an airborne issue, e-coli, salmonella, Hepatitis A, or anything transferred person to person.

Due to the quick reporting by event attendees, Public Health was able to respond in an immediate and comprehensive manner to contain further outbreak.

Samples have, and are being sent to a state lab for testing. Public Health staff hopes to receive data next week, but this depends on the number of investigations of both ill and well people that staff is still in the process of conducting.

June 5 Rifle Rodeo attendees are asked to call 970-625-5200, ext. 8128, and a Public Health representative will return the call to complete a brief questionnaire that will help to track down the source of the outbreak.

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

June 8, 2017

## **Public Health interviewing Rifle Rodeo attendees after disease outbreak**

GARFIELD COUNTY, CO – Garfield County Public Health staff hopes to speak with individuals who attended the Rifle Rodeo Monday, June 5. The agency is investigating several dozen calls from people who became ill after attending the event. The department began receiving calls June 6 from citizens with gastrointestinal complaints. Symptoms of the illness included nausea, cramping and diarrhea. These individuals had all attended the Rifle Rodeo, a private event at the Garfield County Fairgrounds the previous evening. Approximately 200 people attended the rodeo.

Public Health is asking people who attended the event to contact the department, even if they did not become ill.

"It appears that people became ill approximately six hours following the end of the rodeo event Monday night," said Billy Harkins, Environmental Health Specialist with the Garfield County Consumer Protection Program. "We are still investigating the cause of the outbreak, and are taking all possible factors into consideration. The total number of individuals who became ill and the duration of their illness has not been confirmed." Garfield County officials are working with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to determine the cause of the illness.

To pinpoint the source of the outbreak, Garfield County is attempting to contact individuals with and without symptoms who attended the Rifle Rodeo at the Garfield County Fairgrounds on Monday, June 5. Individuals are asked to leave a phone message for a county staff person to return their call at 970-625-5200, ext. 8128, with phone contact information. A public health representative will return the call to complete a brief questionnaire that will help to track down the source of the outbreak.