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## Challenges associated with hepatitis A virus in berries and berry products: A food regulators perspective

Scott Crerar, James Conlan, Michelle Robertson, Kate Astridge, Ben Daughtry and Adele Yates  
Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Australia

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) outbreaks associated with ready to eat berries and berry products have emerged globally as a public health threat in recent years. Several consecutive multi-country food borne HAV outbreaks were experienced in Europe from 2012-2014, Australia and New Zealand in 2015 and Canada in 2016. Globally, berry growing and processing areas and their associated supply chains are diverse and complex, making traceability and certification of good agricultural and good manufacturing processes a complex task for industry suppliers and food safety regulators. In this context, traditional risk assessments are problematic due to limitations in data on prevalence in berries and subsequent assessment of exposure. For ready to eat fresh or frozen products, there are currently no effective, realistic and validated risk management options to eliminate viral contamination prior to consumption without changing the normally desired characteristics of the food. Testing for HAV in berries is problematic and batch testing is not a reliable indicator of the relative safety of the berries or berry product. Testing may be appropriate for outbreak investigations or in circumstances where there is a strong epidemiological suspicion of contamination. Data from the outbreak of HAV associated with berries that occurred in Australia in 2015 will be presented. The challenges associated with control, particularly in obtaining assurances around good agricultural and hygienic practices were evident as a result of this outbreak. As these are critical to the risk management of ready to eat berries, food safety regulators should have mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with these practices.

### Biography

Scott Crerar is a General Manager of Risk and Regulatory Assessment at Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). He has oversight of chemical and microbiological risk assessment and social science and regulatory impact assessments. He has previously led the Strategic Science, International and Surveillance Section and managed the development and implementation of the FSANZ Science Strategy and international work including APEC activities. He has worked in food safety and regulation for many years and undertaken consultancies in food safety and quality for the FAO and WHO, as well as working throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

[scott.crerar@foodstandards.gov.au](mailto:scott.crerar@foodstandards.gov.au)

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