

# Making a Difference

## 2020 Lubbock County Food Protection Management

*Helping People Be Healthier & Safer*

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**Relevance: Food Protection Management/Food Handlers/Food Safety** - Each year, an estimated 1 in 6 people become ill from the food they eat. Common symptoms of foodborne disease include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, fever, and headache. While some people may view this as a mere case of “food poisoning”, foodborne illness has serious health and economic consequences. In fact, foodborne illnesses from five pathogens alone (Campylobacter, Salmonella, Listeria monocytogenes, E. coli 0157:H7 and E. coli non157:H7 STEC) cost more than \$6.9 billion in medical expenses, lost productivity, and even death. Everyone is at risk for foodborne illness, but older adults, pregnant women, young children, individuals with chronic disease, and those with a compromised immune system are at an increased risk. Because nearly half of our food dollars are spent on foods eaten away from home, it is imperative that employees who work in retail food service handle food safely. On September 1, 2016, a new Texas law took effect requiring all food service employees to have the 2-hr food handler’s certification. This included many day care teachers, and non-profit church volunteers, and senior center cooks depending on the regulatory authority rules in each jurisdiction. DSHS inspectors do not require some to have the certification but the City of Lubbock Sanitarians do require it. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, handwashing and food safety became of paramount importance for everyone. Many people also became much more interested in returning to growing their own produce and preserving it. This renewed interest in food preservation resulted in a need for food safety and knowledge of safe canning equipment and procedures. Many are selling produce, & canned, & baked goods at local farmer’s markets but also purchasing in bulk and growing their own foods needing to be preserved. The Cottage Food Law passed a few years ago requires these people selling at farmer’s markets to have the food handler’s certification. Because of the pandemic, face to face classes were not possible most of the time. Information and classes needed to be provided virtually or online.

**Response: Food Protection Management/Food Handler’s/Food Safety** – To meet the need for quality food safety education in Texas retail food establishment, as well as for individuals, the Food Protection Management (FPM) program was developed. Our one or two-day certified food manager program, which is Prometric, ServSafe & ANSI certified, prepares food service workers to sit for the National Prometric or ServSafe Certified Food Manager exam. The class is advertised via media and on the FPM website. Our 2-hour food handler program, which is accredited by the Department of State Health Services, trains front-line workers on the basic principles of food safety. With a bill passed by the Texas Legislature, beginning September 1, 2016, all food establishment employees, including some day care teachers, & non-profit church volunteers &

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senior center workers in Lubbock must have the 2-hr. food handler's certification within 60 days of employment. The 2-hr. food handler's class was offered to the public, to restaurants, day cares, senior centers, etc. through media and Work Force Solutions. They have contracted with this agent to provide the training to their clients and have assisted in advertising the public classes for day care centers on their mailing lists. Both programs are conducted at the county level by Extension Agents. In addition, the Cottage Food Law allowing entrepreneurs to grow, make & sell produce, canned & baked goods at farmer's markets, also required them to get the 2-hr. food handler's certification.

**Results: Food Protection Mgt./Food Handler's-** FPM 2-day classes were to have been scheduled in Lubbock County and this agent was also to present the 2 hr. food handler's classes for Work Force Solutions, the public and restaurant, head start and day care employees in 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic shut-down, these could not be held in person. Work Force Solutions has not opened facilities up to the public for in person unemployment assistance, or classes for job skills. A virtual food handler's class was not possible until September 2020, when the State FPM department was able to get the food handlers class pre- and post-tests changed into a Qualtrics format and agreed with the opening up of businesses with limited numbers of participants, to allow a virtual delivery of the 1- or 2- day FPM course and scheduled testing with limited numbers of participants as ServSafe requires in person testing. Most of the individuals inquiring about classes as well as the South Plains Community Action Association Head Start with a group of 50-100 wanted a virtual class but were directed to our online course due to it being before our virtual class offering was possible and others were directed to the online TX DSHS food manager course. No other response was received on virtual classes. Therefore, no food handler's or FPM classes were conducted. The District 2 FCH food preservation team and FCH teams from across the state offered virtual food preservation classes and these opportunities were posted on social media for Lubbock County residents to participate in. The District 3 Face Book Live Food Preservation class was offered via 6 social media posts reaching 946. Canner checks were provided on an as needed, appointment only basis. Ten canners were tested for safety with 6 needing gauges replaced, 2 needing vent or seal replacement, and 4 needing adjustment in processing pressure within recommended guidelines. Fifty-four Social media posts were made providing food safety and food preservation information reaching 2,705. Several requests have been received for an FPM class in December, but Lubbock is in the red category that does not allow face to face programs. When this rating changes, classes will be offered in 2021.

## VALUE

### Food Safety Education



Both those who work in food-service establishments and those who simply cook in their own kitchens benefit from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's food-safety education programs. The resulting improvement in safe food handling benefits consumers by helping prevent food-borne illnesses and the public health care costs they cause.

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