Food Safety Infosheet
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NOROVIRUS IS A PROBLEM FOR RESTAURANTS

The virus can be introduced into a site by ill patrons or food handlers and can remain on surface for weeks. Proper handwashing, excluding ill staff (for at least two days after disappearance of symptoms), and properly cleaning and sanitizing after vomit events can reduce risk.

Use protective tools when cleaning up vomit, including disposable gloves, disposable surgical or procedure masks, and disposable aprons.

Norovirus can be aerosolized in vomit and may be spread up to 25 feet outside visually affected areas.

Chlorine bleach can inactivate norovirus; Quaternary ammonia (quats) are not recommended because they are not effective. A 5,000 ppm (1.5 cups of 5.25% bleach per gallon of water) bleach solution should be applied to soiled areas for at least 4 minutes.

In December 2012, a Casper, WY Golden Corral was linked to an outbreak of norovirus affecting over 300 patrons. Health investigators cited improper clean-up of multiple vomit incidents within the dining area and restrooms as likely sources of the outbreak. Investigators also found other risky food safety practices including poor sanitation, cross-contamination between utensils and food, and improper handwashing.

Two 2010 outbreaks of norovirus were linked to an Auckland, New Zealand caterer and eventually traced to one food handler. The individual had been ill with norovirus and prepared meals only 45 hrs after recovering from symptoms. The outbreaks were the source of 38 illnesses.

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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