

**Outbreak of Gastroenteritis Associated with Coyote Canyon Restaurant —
Shawnee County, January 2009**



Background

On January 12, 2009, the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) was notified of a possible outbreak of gastrointestinal illness among individuals who shared a meal from the Coyote Canyon restaurant, 1251 S W Ashworth Place, Topeka, KS, 66604. The preliminary complaint indicated that a party of twelve ate the evening of January 9, and seven became ill the following day with diarrhea; two individuals sought care at a hospital. In response to this report, an outbreak investigation was initiated by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Shawnee County Health Agency (SCHA).

Key Findings

Telephone interviews conducted by SCHA revealed that eleven individuals from five different households ate at the buffet-style restaurant, and five later felt ill. Four met the case definition of illness: onset of diarrhea (three or more loose stools within a 24-hour period) and vomiting after eating at Coyote Canyon. Illness incubation and duration were not determined, as precise onset and recovery dates were not obtained.

Food histories were collected from both ill and non-ill individuals. No foods were associated with illness.

Two of the cases sought care at a hospital. One was treated in the emergency room and discharged, while the other was hospitalized. Two stool samples from this patient were collected. One, collected on January 11 and tested by the hospital, was negative for bacteria, parasites, and shiga toxin. The other sample, collected January 13 and tested at KDHE Laboratories, was negative for bacteria and norovirus.

A food inspection of the establishment was conducted on January 13. The inspection revealed three critical violations, which were all corrected on-site: (1) food debris on a knife, spatula, and onion slicer; (2) two dented cans of food; and (3) cheesecake held above 41°F.

Restaurant employees were surveyed for recent illness. One employee, a dining room attendant, reported experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms. The employee's date of onset was not reported, but the illness occurred between January 7 and January 11. The employee worked five shifts from January 7 through January 11.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Four individuals from three different households became ill with diarrhea and vomiting after sharing a meal at Coyote Canyon. Although these individuals reported no other common exposures, the illness cannot be conclusively linked to the shared restaurant meal.

Although one employee may have been ill at the time of the meal, the employee was not a foodhandler, and is unlikely to be the source of illness. Employees with gastrointestinal symptoms should be restricted from foodhandling until 24 hours after the symptoms have ceased.

The outbreak's cause is not known. To be successful in pinpointing the source of an outbreak, future investigations must produce complete and accurate histories of each exposed individual's symptoms and food consumption.

Report author: Daniel Neises, MPH (Kansas Department of Health and Environment)

Investigation by:

Shawnee County Health Agency

1615 SW 8th Ave

Topeka, Kansas 66606

<http://www.co.shawnee.ks.us/HA/>

**Kansas Department of Agriculture
Division of Food Safety and Lodging**

109 SW 9th Street, 3rd Floor

Topeka, KS 66612

http://www.ksda.gov/food_safety/

**Kansas Department of Health & Environment
Office of Surveillance and Epidemiology**

1000 SW Jackson St., Suite 210

Topeka, Kansas 66612

<http://www.kdheks.gov/>