

U.S. Food & Drug Administration

Dr. L. Warm



The key purpose of this character is to give students a sense of the various agencies that regulate different aspects of the food system. Explain that scientific data for dioxin is not certain (point out that most of what we know about dioxin comes from tests on animals, so it's not certain whether it has the same effects on humans), and that there are no tolerances or other administrative levels for dioxins in food or feed. Consequently, the appearance of dioxin compounds in a food or feed supply is a grave concern. FDA, in conjunction with the European Union and the USDA, is addressing both international and domestic dioxin and PCB concerns. FDA is also working cooperatively with state feed regulators and other relevant federal agencies to trace the distribution of dioxin contaminated feed products. However, at this point in the investigation, FDA does not believe this situation poses a human health risk.

For more information on FDA and dioxin, see: www.fda.gov/cvm/dioxin_domestic.html

Questions for U.S. FDA Representative and ANSWERS:

Q: Who are you? And What is the FDA?

A: I work for the US Food and Drug Administration in our regional office in Massachusetts, but our headquarters are in Washington, DC. Our mission is to protect public health by assuring the safety, efficacy, and security of our nation's food supply as well as human and veterinary drugs, biological products, medical devices, cosmetics, and products that emit radiation.

Q: Are you responsible for ensuring that our chicken is safe?

A: Well, actually, we don't regulate meat and poultry, but we do work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which regulates meat and poultry. We do, however, regulate most food products and the pesticides and chemicals that may be found in/on those products. But

we also share this responsibility with the USDA and the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). We also have a bioterrorism initiative, which is another reason we are involved with the dioxin contamination.

Q: Do you regulate dioxin in food?

A: We try... we launched a multi-agency investigation a few years back to investigate possible sources of dioxin in the food supply, but that was at the federal level and I am not sure where that stands now.