

# SALMONELLA SCARE PEANUT BUTTER CONTAMINATION CREATES CAUTION, CONFUSION

In mid-January 2009, an FDA probe into salmonella contamination at a factory owned by Peanut Corporation of America prompted widespread media attention on the safety of peanut-based products and widespread recalls of products containing peanuts by major brands including Smucker's and Kellogg's, with Starbucks even pulling products from its shelves.

## Which companies were most often mentioned in coverage of the scare?

On the Web, Kellogg was mentioned nearly three times as often as other companies due to its recall of 16 products, following confirmation of contamination in a single package of Austin Quality Foods Toasty Crackers.

While Midwestern grocer Meijer was mentioned in relative frequency on the Web, press and newswire coverage did not mention the retailer often. Major food companies like General Mills, McKee Foods, Kroger and ConAgra appeared more frequently in traditional media.

## Who was writing most often about the scare?

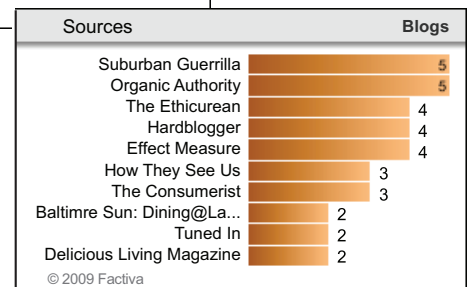
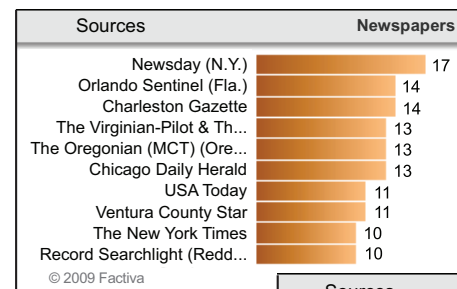
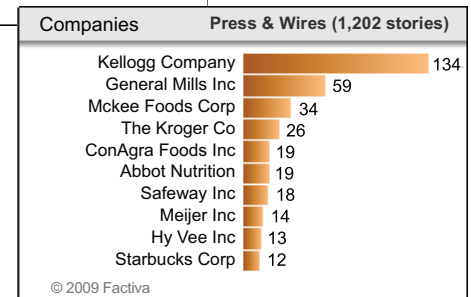
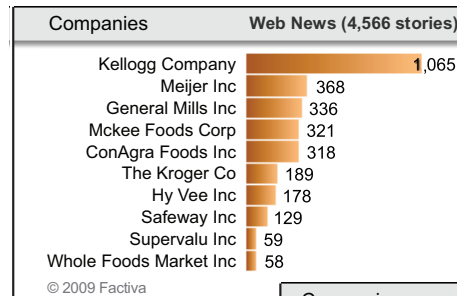
Newspapers around the country covered the recalls, with no one region dominating. Comments on the blogs expressed confusion over the appearance of salmonella in a food like peanut butter. "This isn't like raw beef, fish or chicken. PB is a cooked product for gods sake," posted Ron, while bluelyon asked: "So, why would they need to recall the dog biscuits. Aren't those baked? Shouldn't that kill the salmonella?" Others criticized the FDA for not taking a stronger stance, while companies voluntarily recalled their products: "while [Peanut Corporation of America] has quickly responded with a voluntary recall, the FDA has yet to issue a press release telling the public they should avoid the stuff. Are they nuts?"

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<sup>1</sup>Suburban Guerrilla  
<sup>2</sup>The Ethicurean