



FACT SHEET: *E. coli* O157:H7

<p>What is <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7?</p>	<p><i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 is one of hundreds of strains of the bacterium <i>Escherichia coli</i>. Although most strains of this bacterium are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals, this particular strain produces a powerful toxin and can cause illness. The combination of letters and numbers in the name of the bacterium refers to specific genetic markers found on its surface, which distinguishes it from other types of <i>E. coli</i>. Eating food that has not been cooked sufficiently to kill bacteria such as <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 can cause severe illness in humans.</p>										
<p>Incidence of <i>E. Coli</i> O157:H7 Declines</p>	<p>The incidence of <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 is on a downward trend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The incidence of <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 in ground beef declined more than 80 percent between 2000 and 2006, according to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). • In 2006 and into 2007, FSIS reports that just 0.17 percent of samples have tested positive for <i>E. coli</i>. 										
<p>Commitment to Safety Research</p>	<p>Years ago, America's beef producers set out to reduce and eliminate <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 and today remain committed to that goal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef producers have invested more than \$25 million since 1993 in beef safety research, leading to best practices which serve as a road map in reducing <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7. The best practices are in addition to strict oversight by USDA. • Greater than 80 percent of the research funded by America's beef producers is used throughout the beef supply chain on a daily basis to enhance the safety of beef and beef products • The beef industry invests approximately \$400 million every year in testing, interventions and research to ensure beef safety. <p>Today, because of the research and cooperative efforts with all partners in the beef supply chain, interventions to reduce and eliminate <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 are in place on farms, in feedlots and in packing plants across the country.</p>										
<p>Making Progress Using Best Practices</p>	<p>Individuals representing each segment of the production chain meet yearly to review and update the Beef Industry Food Safety Council (BIFSCo) Best Practices, which serve as a roadmap in reducing <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and companies involved in this process recognize that safety is a non-competitive issue. • These Best Practices are ever-changing documents that are updated and reviewed as scientific and technological advances are made. These resources are available free of charge at www.bifsc.org. 										
<p>Tips for Preventing Foodborne Illnesses</p>	<p>Consumers can take important steps in the kitchen to ensure their food is safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always wash hands, cutting boards, utensils and countertops with hot, soapy water before and after handling meat. • Don't cross-contaminate — separate raw meat and poultry from other foods and don't place cooked food on a plate that previously contained raw meat or poultry. • Refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers promptly after eating. • Use an instant-read meat thermometer to ensure the proper internal temperature and eliminate any harmful bacteria. <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Recommended Cooking Temperatures</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Poultry</td> <td>165°F</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ground Beef</td> <td>160°F</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Beef Roasts and Steaks</td> <td>145°F</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Seafood</td> <td>145°F</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Recommended Cooking Temperatures		Poultry	165°F	Ground Beef	160°F	Beef Roasts and Steaks	145°F	Seafood	145°F
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<p>Food Safety Questions</p>	<p>USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: For food safety answers on topics including safe storage and handling of food, safe preparation, product dating, product content and more. The hotline is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern time on weekdays year round. Call toll-free: 888-MPHotline (888-674-6854) Email: mph hotline.fsis@usda.gov Online: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Home/index.asp</p>										