



Ohio Department of Agriculture  
and  
Ohio Department of Health



**Governor** Ted Strickland  
**Lieutenant Governor** Lee Fisher

**ODA Director** Robert J. Boggs  
**ODH Director** Alvin D. Jackson, M.D.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STATE DEPARTMENTS OF HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE**  
**CONFIRM BEEF'S LINK TO *E. COLI* PATIENTS**

COLUMBUS (June 25, 2008) - Ohio departments of Health and Agriculture confirmed today that a raw ground beef sample provided by an Ohio *E. coli* O157:H7 case is linked by genetic fingerprinting to the multistate outbreak in Ohio and Michigan. Test results released today verify the *E. coli* present in the beef sample shares the same genetic fingerprint with the bacteria that has sickened 19 Ohioans in recent weeks.

Information submitted with the positive beef sample indicates the product was purchased at the Kroger Marketplace in Gahanna. It is important for consumers to realize beef purchased from other sources may also be tainted, and steps should be taken to protect themselves from foodborne illnesses.

“Food safety is the No. 1 priority of the Ohio Department of Agriculture,” said Director Robert Boggs. “The department is working closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to perform a traceback investigation to find the source of this ground beef.”

A second sample, purchased by a consumer from a Kroger in Fairfield County, was sent to the Ohio Department of Agriculture Consumer Analytical Lab in Reynoldsburg and tested negative for *E. coli* O157:H7. No further tests were necessary.

The Ohio Department of Health and local health departments in six counties continue to investigate 19 Ohio cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 that have been linked genetically and epidemiologically to cases in Michigan. The 19 cases being investigated are in Franklin (nine confirmed, two probable), Delaware (one confirmed), Fairfield (four confirmed), Lucas (one confirmed), Seneca (one confirmed) and Union (one confirmed) cases.

“Reports of foodborne illnesses tend to increase in the summer months and Ohioans should be aware of steps they can take to protect themselves and their loved ones,” said Ohio Health Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. “*E. coli* infection is a serious illness that is preventable.”

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Ohio averages 140 reported cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 annually. Steps consumers should take to protect themselves include:

- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom or changing diapers, before and after eating or preparing food and after touching animals.
- Cook ground beef to 160° F. Test the meat by putting a food thermometer in the thickest part of the meat. Wash the thermometer after each use. Don't eat ground beef that is pink in the middle. If a restaurant serves you an undercooked hamburger, send it back for more cooking. Ask for a new bun and a clean plate, too.
- Don't spread bacteria in your kitchen. Keep raw meat away from other foods. Wash your hands, cutting board, counter, dishes and silverware with hot soapy water after they touch raw meat, spinach, greens or sprouts. Never put cooked meat in a container that held uncooked meat.
- Drink only pasteurized milk, juice or cider. Frozen juice or juice sold in boxes and glass jars at room temperature has been pasteurized, although it may not say so on the label.
- Drink water from safe sources such as municipal water that has been treated with chlorine, wells that have been tested, or bottled water. Do not swallow lake or pool water while swimming.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables prior to eating them.

People with *E. coli* O157:H7 typically have diarrhea, which can be bloody and severe, and abdominal cramps two to eight days after infection. People with these symptoms should see their physicians.

**-30-**

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