

Food Safety Alert – 10/04/06

The Californian is reporting that five new cases of E Coli-related illnesses were reported yesterday.

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061004/NEWS01/610040307>

That brings the running total up to 192 persons in 26 states.

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodborne/ecolispinach/current.htm>

State health officials are reporting that E Coli has been found in 8 samples of manure which had been removed from pastures located near the 9 farms being investigated. The samples are currently being tested to see if the strain matches that which is responsible for the 193 cases of food poisoning.

http://today.reuters.com/news/articleinvesting.aspx?type=bondsNews&storyID=2006-10-03T233919Z_01_N03311032_RTRIDST_0_HEALTH-SPINACH.XML

Congressman Sam Farr held a press conference yesterday during which he intended to eat locally-grown spinach, however, neither he nor his staff were able to purchase any from stores (Nob Hill and Albertsons).

http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/breaking_news/15671035.htm

The Herald article contains more on the points of his statement. Farr stated that a marketing campaign will be launched to regain consumer confidence. Also, he said that he will pursue federal funding for research efforts to determine how E Coli is transmitted, and the effects of the coastal climate on the survival period of E Coli in order to set protocols in place that will prevent future outbreaks.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/15674488.htm>

Congressman Farr's conference came after a closed-door meeting with local growers and Senator Jeff Denham of Merced to discuss some details of the investigation and the next steps. Farr stated that the FDA investigation may conclude as early as this week, and results to be published next week. Growers also plan to meet today to discuss the industry's planned safety measures. Representatives from the Grower-Shipper Association, Western Growers, Produce Marketing Association and the United Fresh Produce Association will likely attend the closed meeting.

<http://www.californianonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061004/NEWS01/610040307>

Here are some more details on Natural Selection Foods' enhanced safety measures which were proposed last week:

Natural Selection Foods will now require a number of measures be taken by each of the growers that supply our company with the fresh cut produce that we pack. What we are proposing will require the close cooperation and support of our farming partners to raise the food safety bar.

- Natural Selection Foods will work with the growers from seed to harvest, inspecting the seed, irrigation water, soil, soil amendments, plant tissues and wildlife, all of which will be tested, monitored and certified.
- Existing sanitation protocols for farm equipment, packaging supplies and transportation vehicles will be enhanced and monitored.
- Most important is what we are calling the "firewall." We will be testing all of the freshly harvested greens — spinach and everything else — that are brought to our facility before they enter our production stream. If pathogens are detected, the lot will be discarded. This program is modeled on the program successfully implemented by the beef industry and approved by the International Commission on Microbiological

Specifications for Food. This “firewall” will prevent anything like this E. coli-contaminated produce from ever entering our facilities.

Read more at <http://www.ebfarm.com/Press/SpinachUpdates/index.aspx>