

Food Safety Alert – 10/11/06

The latest news in the E Coli outbreak is that Nunes Co. lettuce, which was voluntarily recalled, has tested negative for the 0157:H7 strain of E Coli which has sickened 200 people and killed 3.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/local/15729811.htm>

The news of the recall has drawn public attention to the self-testing procedures of the produce industry. Consumer Groups are calling for stronger federal and state regulations and more regulatory oversight on farms with special attention to health and safety standards and procedures.

<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/living/health/15721613.htm>

Despite the negative test results, Mexico has banned U.S. ships carrying American-grown lettuce from entering Mexican ports. Mexico imports approximately 8 million pounds of lettuce from Monterey County annually. Federal officials speculate that this unprecedented ban might be more of a response to the border fence construction and the treatment of migrant workers in the United States. Lettuce exports are contract-based, and such a wide reaching ban will probably affect trade relations between the U.S. and Mexico.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/local/15729811.htm>

According to the *San Jose Mercury News*, state health inspectors are looking into wild pigs as a source of the E Coli virus. CA Fish and Game officers are currently planning on capturing pigs in the area to collect scat samples for testing.

<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/living/health/15729946.htm>

Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, is holding state Senate hearings with state and federal public health and food safety agencies, agriculture industry representatives, legal experts, scientists and water resources representatives today to address recent E. coli outbreaks in California-grown spinach. However, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Jeff Denham, R-Merced, who plans on holding a joint hearing on the E Coli outbreak after the investigation has concluded, is against the hearings, and has warned that such a development might be result in a witch hunt.

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/15729808.htm>

According to Paul Matulich, the San Benito County Ag Commissioner, the 4.7 million pounds of spinach from 875 acres worth \$3.3 million went unsold this season. On Behalf of the County, he has looked into trying to get federal assistance for San Benito County growers by having the outbreak declared a national disaster, but such an option is unlikely.

<http://www.freelancenews.com/news/contentview.asp?c=196853>