

Food Safety Alert – 10/24/06

Yesterday, the *San Jose Mercury News* ran an op ed piece written by Marion Nestle, the Paulette Goddard professor of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University. The article proclaims that the E. Coli outbreak was predictable – because the FDA and USDA have no authority at the farm level, since Congress has not given the agencies that authority. Her ultimate message is the necessity for a complete overhaul of the food safety system. But underlying this message is the vindication of organic produce and grass-fed beef (even though the positive fecal samples were taken from a pasture) and support for the bill introduced by Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill. and Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn providing authority over food safety to a single unified agency.

<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/editorial/15831146.htm>

Texas A & M researchers are studying Buck Creek to determine water quality of a rangeland watershed (Red River Basin is 289 square mile watershed). The study includes taking water samples at different points of the creek and measuring contaminants, including E. Coli. So far, the maximum allowable levels of E. Coli have been exceeded on three different occasions at different points in the creek. The creek is spring-fed from a rural watershed, which includes crops and grazing lands, however, researchers have also noted that the creek is a water source for turkey, hogs, deer, beaver, raccoons, birds and other animals. Phase 1, the bacterial monitoring phase, is essentially complete and Phase II is concentrating on bacterial-source tracking, he said. The Phase II study will identify the animal sources contributing to the contamination, as well as their relative contribution to the total bacterial load. The ultimate goal is to educate stakeholders and develop a Watershed Protection Plan so water quality will be able to support a healthy aquatic ecosystem and recreational activities.

<http://agnews.tamu.edu/dailynews/stories/RNEC/Oct2406a.htm>

The outbreak has caused an increase in publicity to the recall of food products. The AP is reporting this morning on the recall of 1680 pounds of beef by Omaha Beef Co., Inc., a Connecticut beef company. The affected beef was packaged in 10-pound boxes of "HAMBURGER PATTIES, OMAHA BEEF CO., INC." and in 5- and 10-pound bags of "HAMBURGER, OMAHA BEEF CO., INC." The packages have the establishment number "Est. 2769" inside the U.S. Department of Agriculture mark of inspection and the case code 101861.

Here is the Washington post article:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/24/AR2006102400018.html>

Maryland health officials have confirmed the state's fifth spinach-related e. coli victim. There are two more suspected cases, including one death.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/23/AR2006102301125.html>

Here is another article by the *San Francisco Chronicle* boasting the capability of eradicating food-borne illnesses through the use of irradiation.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/10/23/EDG6PKDSPN1.DTL&hw=coli&sn=002&sc=626>