Food Safety Alert – 12/01/06

In science news related to E. coli contamination, Cornell University is working on a wipe consumers could use to detect biohazards. The biodegradable wipe can be used to detect viruses and bacteria like E. coli, the avian flu and salmonella. It uses nanofibers that contain antibodies to numerous biohazards and chemicals. It works much the same way a napkin or sponge would: simply swipe it across a meat or vegetables and it changes colors when it detects any kind of biohazard. The wipe could also be used to detect chemicals on countertops or other areas which could make it ideal to use in public places and on airplanes. Nanofibers have a diameter near 100 nanometers. (A nanometer is one-billionth of a meter is about three times the size of an atom). These wipes are composed of a polymer compound made from corn and could be used in conventional paper products. While the researchers say that they are still a few years away from having this ready for mass production, it offers another promising way to detect biohazards and chemicals to consumers.

http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Sept06/napkin.biohazard.ssl.html