

Food Safety

E.Coli Still a Risk in Ground Beef Due to ‘Restrained Enforcement’

Normal safe food handling guidance is insufficient

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“Ground beef is not a completely safe product,” Dr. Jeffrey Bender, a food safety expert at the Univ. Of Minnesota, says, according to *The New York Times*. While E.coli outbreaks have been on the decline, “it looks a bit like we’re going in the opposite direction,” he said.

The Times analyzed a 2007 E.coli outbreak traced to a Cargill plant and noted it was due to a “restrained approach to enforcement” by USDA inspectors. An investigation by the USDA found the company was violating its own food safety procedures, but no fines or penalties had been imposed.

A USDA followup inspection of 224 meat plants found 55 were not following their own safety procedures, *The Times* said.

The federal guidance to cook meat thoroughly and wash up afterwards is insufficient, because only a few stray cells can make a diner ill. *The Times* said its own tests “found the safe handling instructions are not enough to prevent the bacteria from spreading through the kitchen.”

Clarion conducts food safety, facilities safety and sanitation audits. For information, contact Tom Mac Dermott, FCSI, president, 603/642-8011 or Angela Phelan, senior vice president, 973/762-7933