

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

<h1>FSIS NOTICE</h1>	49-11	9/9/11
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DISCONTINUATION OF *E. coli* O157:H7 TESTING IN CERTAIN READY-TO-EAT (RTE) PRODUCTS

An analysis of the data from ready-to-eat (RTE) sampling programs showed that since 1994 there has not been an *E. coli* O157:H7 positive test result in these products. This notice informs inspection program personnel (IPP) and Import Inspection Personnel that FSIS discontinued testing of domestic and imported RTE dry and semi-dry fermented sausages and fully cooked meat patties for *E. coli* O157:H7.

NOTE: Samples of dry/semi-dry fermented sausages and fully cooked meat patties will continue to be collected and tested for *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Salmonella* under the ALLRTE, RTE001, and AIIIS sampling programs.

Since 1994, FSIS has tested over 10,000 samples from RTE products (dry/semi-dry fermented sausages and fully cooked meat patties) for *E. coli* O157:H7 through the ALLRTE and RTE001 programs. During this time FSIS has not had a positive *E. coli* O157:H7 test result from these RTE products. Therefore, the Agency has determined that the effectiveness of the testing program for *E. coli* O157:H7 in dry/semi-dry fermented sausages and fully cooked meat patties for verifying process control for these products should be reassessed. Although there was a recent FSIS recall in March 2011 of a Lebanon bologna product linked to an outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7, the contamination was likely due to problems with the establishment's lack of scientific supporting documentation for the critical limits of the process. Such problems are not normally detected by FSIS pathogen sampling programs, because samples are not collected at a frequency high enough to detect processing issues that occur intermittently and at a low frequency. These problems are most often found during Food Safety Assessments (FSAs) or during other in-depth establishment reviews.

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic

NOTICE EXPIRES: 10/1/12

OPI: OPPD

Sampling resources previously utilized for the *E. coli* O157:H7 sampling program for dry/semi-dry fermented sausages and fully cooked meat patties will be diverted to increase testing for *E. coli* O157:H7 in raw products that are more likely to cause a public health risk.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Joseph". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development