

FACT SHEET - RETAIL MICROBIOLOGICAL TEST PROGRAM FOR *ESCHERICHIA COLI* O157:H7 IN RAW GROUND BEEF

Escherichia coli O157:H7 (*E. coli* O157:H7) have been responsible for outbreaks of foodborne illness. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) tests for *E. coli* O157:H7 in raw ground beef at federally inspected establishments, import facilities, and retail locations. The FSIS Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA) collects these samples at the retail level under the MT05 project code. Retail sampling continues to be an important part of FSIS' *E. coli* O157:H7 sampling program. The likelihood that a specific retail facility will be sampled will depend on what the Agency learns about how raw ground beef product is handled at that facility.

When raw ground beef samples are collected, FSIS OIEA will collect information such as the supplier establishment name and number, lot number, production date, and other identifying information that would be useful in the event of a positive *E. coli* O157:H7 sample result. FSIS also will test the samples for *Salmonella*.

If a sample is confirmed positive for *E. coli* O157:H7, the product, if in commerce, would be subject to a Class I recall. In addition, the lot and all affected products produced using the same source material may be subject to recall. Follow-up samples may be collected at the retail location or the supplier. No follow-up samples will be collected based on *Salmonella* analysis results.

The FSIS laboratory also may randomly select some of these raw ground beef samples that are in consumer-ready packaging, with a label bearing a nutrition facts panel, and analyze them for nutrient content. FSIS recommends that retail stores hold and control production lots represented by the MT05 sample until the results for *E. coli* O157:H7 are reported. There is no need to hold product for nutrient content testing since the FSIS laboratory randomly selects products for nutrient content testing.

An initial test is conducted to determine a presumptive positive result for *E. coli* O157:H7. If the initial testing result is negative, no additional testing is necessary. If a presumptive positive is found, you will be notified immediately and confirmation tests on that sample will be performed. For verification of an *E. coli* O157:H7 negative result, call (800) 346-9121, after 4:30 PM Central Time, 96 hours after the sample was collected. If you wish to have both results, you may be provided with an explanation that *Salmonella* results are non-regulatory for raw beef samples.

SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION FORM NUMBER	DATE COLLECTED