



Ohio Department of Agriculture
and
Ohio Department of Health



Governor Bob Taft
Lieutenant Governor Bruce Johnson

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To: Health Commissioners, Environmental Health Directors, Nursing Directors, ODA Food Safety Specialists, and Other Interested Parties

Subject: FDA Warning on Serious Foodborne E.coli O157:H7 Outbreak

Date: September 15, 2006

The ODH Bureau of Environmental Health (BEH), Food Safety Program and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) Division of Food Safety are encouraging local health departments to communicate the recommendation of the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that consumers not eat bagged fresh spinach at this time.

As of September 15, 2006, 7 cases of E-coli have been identified in Ohio that appear to be linked to this multi-state outbreak. The investigation is ongoing and we will issue additional information as it becomes available.

Please see the attached FDA press release below:

**Warning on Serious Foodborne E.coli O157:H7 Outbreak
One Death and Multiple Hospitalizations in Several States**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is issuing an alert to consumers about an outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 in multiple states that may be associated with the consumption of produce. To date, preliminary epidemiological evidence suggests that bagged fresh spinach may be a possible cause of this outbreak.

Based on the current information, FDA advises that consumers not eat bagged fresh spinach at this time. Individuals who believe they may have experienced symptoms of illness after consuming bagged spinach are urged to contact their health care provider.

"Given the severity of this illness and the seriousness of the outbreak, FDA believes that a warning to consumers is needed. We are working closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local agencies to determine the cause and scope of the problem," said Dr. Robert Brackett, Director of FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN).

E. coli O157:H7 causes diarrhea, often with bloody stools. Although most healthy adults can recover completely within a week, some people can develop a form of kidney failure called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS). HUS is most likely to occur in young children and the elderly. The condition can lead to serious kidney damage and even death. To date, 50 cases of illness have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including 8 cases of HUS and one death.

At this time, the investigation is ongoing and states that have reported illnesses to date include: Connecticut, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Wisconsin.

FDA will keep consumers informed of the investigation as more information becomes available.