

# Discard ground beef linked to Northwest E.Coli 0157 infections

Consumers need to dispose of a brand of extra lean ground beef linked to at least eight *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 infections cases in Oregon and Washington, public health officials announced August 30.

The products were sold in Northwest grocery stores in late July and early August. Both products were packaged in 16-ounce black trays and labeled as follows:

"Northwest Finest" brand Natural Ground Beef, 7% fat. The red and black label bears a UPC code of "7 52907 60012 7."

"Northwest Finest" brand Organic Ground Beef, 10% fat. The green and black label has no UPC code.

Each package also bears the establishment number "Est. 965" inside the USDA mark of

inspection as well as a sell-by date between August 1 and August 11, 2007. An alert was issued last week by the federal Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The organic product was sold at QFC, Fred Meyer, and Safeway stores in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska. The natural product was sold at Safeway stores in Oregon, Washington and possibly elsewhere. The meat was ground by Interstate Meat Dist., Inc. in Clackamas, Oregon.

"The first eight confirmed cases were in six households, one in Oregon and five in Washington, said Dr. William E. Keene, senior epidemiologist at the Oregon Public Health Division's communicable disease section. "Our investigation re-

vealed that these households had purchased ground beef from the same source at grocery stores in Oregon and Washington."

Several other household members later became ill through what may have been person-to-person spread, Dr. Keene said. Two of the Washington cases were hospitalized. Both have recovered.

"If you have any low-fat hamburger in your freezer, check the label for the brand name and the SELL BY date. If it meets the description, be safe and throw it out," said Dr. Keene.

E. coli O157 can cause mild to severe intestinal illness, including severe cramps and diarrhea that is often bloody. Some patients develop compli-

cations that require hospitalization. A few patients, especially young children and the elderly, may suffer serious and potentially fatal kidney damage.

"Uncooked meat and poultry should always be handled with caution," said Dr. Keene. "Meat may be safer than it used to be, but it is still always prudent to assume that uncooked meat and poultry are contaminated and to handle them accordingly."

To avoid illness for you and your family, follow these rules:

- Keep raw food separated from cooked food. For example, don't take the burgers off the grill and put them back on the same plate that the raw meat was on. Use a separate, clean plate.

- Clean any utensils and surfaces that touch raw meat thor-

oughly before using them again.

- Store and defrost meat in a way that prevents meat juice from dripping onto other foods or surfaces, including refrigerator shelves and countertops. Refrigerate raw meat packages in a pan to avoid drips.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap after handling raw meat, as well as before eating, after using the toilet, and after changing diapers.

- Cook ground beef thoroughly. It's best to use a thermometer. Make sure that the inside temperature gets up to at least 160°F. If you don't have a thermometer, get one – and use it. In the meantime, at least make sure that none of the meat is still pink and that the juices run clear.

## Make a Dream Catcher at class *Bergerson co-captain of Shriner's East-West game*

The Vernonia Arts and Crafts group will be holding a free class on "Making your own Dream Catcher." Native Americans believe dream catchers bring good fortune.

This instructional class will be presented by Marsha Smith on September 13 at 1:30 p.m. at the Vernonia Library. Everyone is invited and materials will be provided.

For more information, contact Louise Hamnett at 503-429-7401 or Fran Hendrix at 503-429-0936.

Ralph Bergerson, of Vernonia, was named as an honorary co-captain at the 2007 East-West Shrine All-Star football game, held August 4 in Baker City.

How did Bergerson end up there? It's because he's "beefy" he says.

75 years ago, he was in the Shriner's Hospital as a six year-old. In 1932, while Bergerson was playing on the floor, his mother rocked over his toe with her rocking chair. What seemed to be a minor injury nearly killed Bergerson, who developed blood poisoning and ended up in the hospital. He

spent most of a year in the hospital and had extensive muscle damage in his left arm, above the elbow, caused by the blood poisoning in an era before penicillin.

According to Bergerson, the doctors scraped the bone and performed an elbow transplant, using a beef joint as his new elbow. That's what makes him beefy.

After overcoming this physical challenge, plus battling polio in the '40s, Bergerson went into banking in the '50s, and retired as manager from the U.S. Bank in Vernonia, after 30 years. He joined the Al Kader Shriners this year.

Bergerson jumped at the chance to be an honorary captain, saying, "I thought by showing what the Shriners did for me, it would help other peo-

ple." Plus, he got a front row seat for the game, which was once again won by the East with a final score of 42-6.

When you see Bergerson around town, ask him, "Where's the Beef?" and watch him flex his 'beefy' arm for you.

### 20 Years Ago This Month

The August 27, 1987, issue of *The Independent* included the following on the front page under the picture:

Several of the people involved in securing a new water treatment plant to replace Vernonia's sixty-year-old facility, smiled happily at the dedication of the new plant on July 31. From left to right are former councilmember Wells Oviatt, Sen. Joan Dukes, Jerry Sheridan of the Farmers Home Administration, Mayor Wallace Vaughn, former councilmember Dorothy Knowlton, Glenn Higgins of Community Action Team, Boyd Ruby of Vernonia Development Corp. and Gordon Munro of HGE Engineers. Higgins wrote the grant application for the city and guided it through the funding process,

HGE did the engineering studies and monitored progress during construction, and FHA provided a major portion of the funding for the \$750,000, computerized water treatment plant.

Also on the front page of that issue:

An increase of \$2 in the basic monthly service charge for the average consumer, was approved by the West Oregon Electric board of directors at their August 18 meeting, following a public rate hearing at which interested members were conspicuously absent.

The need for this increase was triggered by an increase in Bonneville Power Administration wholesale power rates and rising local costs.

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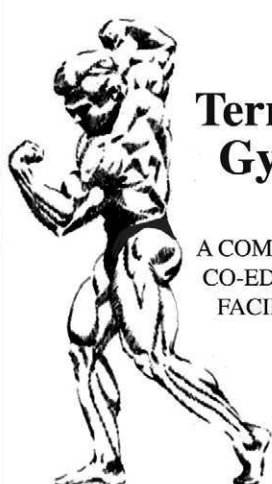
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Bus 503-357-3131 Fax 503-357-9667  
[bunny.girt.b71g@statefarm.com](mailto:bunny.girt.b71g@statefarm.com)

