Beef Grinding Records Kept by Retail Stores
EHS-Net Study Findings and Recommendations

Contaminated ground beef at retail stores like grocery stores can cause foodborne illness outbreaks. To stop further illness and outbreaks, we need to find the source of any ground beef that causes outbreaks. To do this, retail stores must keep good records on where the beef in each batch of ground beef came from. We must learn more about how retail stores keep records on beef grinding. This can help us find ways to make these practices better.

EHS-Net found that most retail stores do not keep records on beef grinding. Without complete records, we cannot find out where contaminated ground beef came from. (This is called a traceback investigation.)

What the Study Described

This study described how retail stores kept records on beef grinding.

What the Study Found

Most stores used trimmings in their grinds.

Just under one-half of stores kept beef grinding logs.

Less than one-quarter of stores with logs kept enough data in their logs for experts to find out where the ground beef came from.

Chain stores were more likely than independent stores to keep logs.

EHS-Net Recommends

Retail food managers and food safety programs should teach food workers about

- What grinding logs are.
- Why it is important to keep them.
- What information should be put in them.

These efforts should focus on independent stores and stores that use trimmings in their grinds.

This study was conducted by the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net). EHS-Net is a federally funded collaboration of federal, state, and local environmental health specialists and epidemiologists working to better understand the environmental causes of foodborne and waterborne illness. Visit EHS-Net at http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet.

National Center for Environmental Health
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Key Terms

Trimmings: beef leftovers made during cutting of steaks and other beef and included in ground beef products.

Chain store: one with the same name and operations as other stores. Grocery stores with the same name in many cities are chain stores.

Independent store: one that does not have the same name or operations as any other store.

Source beef: beef used to create batches of ground beef.

Traceback investigation: effort to find out where food that caused a foodborne illness outbreak was grown, produced, and packaged.