



USDA Unable to Detect Escherichia coli 0157:H7 Infection in U.S. Swine Herd

National Animal Health Monitoring System
Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health, USDA:APHIS:VS

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In recent years, outbreaks of illness due to foodborne E. coli 0157:H7 have increased throughout the U.S. and the world. The USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) recently conducted a study to determine whether or not E. coli 0157:H7 is present in the U.S. market hog population. While many strains of E. coli can be isolated from swine, NAHMS specifically looked for E. coli 0157:H7 because it is a human pathogen, says Dr. Eric Bush, NAHMS Swine Specialist.

Through the NAHMS Swine 95 study, the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories examined 4,229 swine fecal samples collected from 152 randomly selected pork operations in the 6 top swine-producing states. No samples were found positive for E. coli 0157:H7. "Without testing every hog in the country, we cannot say with 100 percent certainty that E. coli 0157:H7 is not shed by finisher hogs in the U.S.," says Bush, "However, the statistical design of this study does allow us to be confident that if this organism does exist in hogs, it is shed by less than 0.07 percent of the population." Swine 95 will also provide prevalence information on Salmonella, another pathogen of human health interest. Dr. Bush says national results are expected early in 1997.

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