

## **Extension Notes**

Personal Column for March 23, 2010

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director

### **Grilling You on Food Safety**

Yea, it is grilling season! Some friends called the other day to invite me over to help them celebrate the resurrection of the family grill. This season is also a good time to refresh our memories about food safety.

A thermometer is the one sure way to be certain your meat is fully cooked according to Sam Beattie, Iowa State University Food Safety Extension Specialist. The very serious *E. coli* illness can result from eating under-cooked burgers.

To take the temperature of a hamburger, Beattie recommends holding the patty with tongs and pushing the point of the thermometer into the side of the burger going toward the center. The thermometer should hit the thickest part of the hamburger and read 160°F.

Beattie says that 160°F kills the bacterium *E. coli* O157:H7 and other illness causing bacteria. Children are especially sensitive to the *E. coli* bacterium.

If you don't have a thermometer, cook the meat until it is brown and the juices are clear without any bloodiness or cloudiness. However, you can never be guaranteed that the product is hot enough without a thermometer.

Besides using a thermometer be sure to keep your food cold and clean.

Keep it cold -- When picnicking and eating outdoors food can warm up in the sun and get to the temperatures that allow illness causing bacteria to grow. Meats should be thawed in the home refrigerator before taken to the picnic and should be kept on ice until just before cooking.

Pack your food on ice or keep in the refrigerator until just before serving will help prevent illness. The two hour rule is the key -- you have two hours at room temperature for perishable foods.

Keep it clean. One of the leading mistakes that we make is to use the same platter for raw meat as the grilled meat. Bacteria from the juices of the raw meat contaminate the cooked meat.

You will really enjoy this grilling season when you avoid bacteria problems by following these food safety tips when getting that grill fired up.

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