



## *Quality Food Analysis, Consultation & Training Services, LLC*

*P.O. Box 15906, Beverly Hills, CA 90209*

*323.823.1764 ? [Qualityfacts@aol.com](mailto:Qualityfacts@aol.com)*

*fax 323.571.1889*

### April 2008: Beef Recall (BSE)

2007 saw a huge spike in fresh and frozen ground beef recalls due to E-coli O157-H7 in the United States. What is a recall? According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), recall is a voluntary action taken by the manufacturer or distributor to remove adulterated or misbranded products from commerce.

In February, 2008, a California company, Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company, was not preventing cattle that was too sick or weak to stand on their own from entering the food supply, and was ordered by the USDA to recall its entire production of meat from the last two years. This led to 143 million pounds of beef being recalled and became the largest meat recall in history.

Hallmark/Westland Company was not regularly having federal veterinarians examine cattle these sick cows that were exhibiting problems with their central nervous system. About 37 million pounds of the meat was delivered to public lunch programs as cuts, ground beef, meatballs and burrito fillings and most of it was already consumed. Since the announcement of the recall, Jack in the Box, In-N-Out, and about 150 school districts throughout the country have announced that they will discontinue use of Westland ground beef.

Cattle with central nervous systems problems gives rise to concern that they have bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease. BSE is a chronic degenerative disease that affects the central nervous system of the cattle and its name comes from the spongy appearance of the brain tissue of infected cattle examined under a microscope. Cattle can become infected with BSE by eating feed contaminated with the infectious BSE agent. Although not scientifically proven, there is a strong link between a degenerative, fatal brain disorder in humans called variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) and the consumption of BSE-contaminated product. vCJD also attacks the central nervous system and causes psychiatric symptoms.

Unfortunately, neither cooking nor food irradiation will destroy BSE agents. The only way to control it is to prevent the meat from entering the food supply chain. This reemphasizes that need for food facilities to regular check their food sources, even if their products are coming from large and licensed sources.

In order to implement all of these solutions, training is critical. Five minutes a day of staff training would make all the difference. Why don't you try various methods to incorporate training into your work day? If you have any questions regarding sanitation or food safety, or require additional information regarding staff training, please feel free to e-mail us.