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Conventional Ground Beef Is Three Times More Likely to Contain Antibiotic-Resistant Fecal Bacteria Than Grass-Fed Beef

by Dr. Mercola

Factory farming methods may be efficient and cost-effective, but they produce a number of side effects that can threaten your health and even your life. Contamination with disease-causing fecal bacteria is one of them.

To combat foodborne illness, the food industry has created solutions that further worsens matters — sterilization methods such as high heat, chemicals (chlorine-based or lactic acid washes, for example), and/or radiation.

Yet the central issue remains unaddressed, which is the lack of hygiene standards in the raising, slaughtering, and processing of the animals.

A large percentage of meat products become contaminated when the animals' intestines are punctured and stool spills onto the meat being processed.

This is the real problem — not undercooking, as properly processed healthy meat will not harm you if it's undercooked as it will not be contaminated with fecal bacteria.

In 2011, researchers found about half of all meats and poultry sold in grocery stores were contaminated with drug-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, the bacteria that causes most staph infections.

Why Ground Beef Is So Unsafe

Ground beef tends to be far more problematic than solid cuts of meat, and the reason for this is that in the latter the bacteria tend to remain on the surface of the meat. Once you cook it, most of the bacteria are destroyed.

When the meat is ground, however, those same bacteria get mixed *throughout* the meat, contaminating all of it. So if you like your hamburger on the rare side, the pathogens may still be alive and well in the center of the beef patty.

Another contributing factor is the fact that in the making of ground beef, meat from a number of animals is mixed together, and all you need is for *one* contaminated animal to affect a very large batch

of meat.

Moreover, as noted by the featured article:

"Ground beef (like other ground meats) can also go through several grinding steps at processing plants and in stores, providing more opportunities for cross-contamination to occur. And then there's the way home cooks handle raw ground beef: kneading it with bare hands to form burger patties or a meatloaf. Unless you're scrupulous about washing your hands thoroughly afterward, bacteria can remain and contaminate everything you touch — from the surfaces in your kitchen to other foods you are preparing."

Organically Raised Beef Is Safer; Grass-Fed Is Best

Overall, beef from animals raised in confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) was more likely to be contaminated with bacteria, including antibiotic-resistant bacteria, compared to beef from sustainably raised animals. According to Consumer Reports:

"... 18 percent of conventional beef samples were contaminated with superbugs — the dangerous bacteria that are resistant to three or more classes of antibiotics — compared with just nine percent of beef from samples that were sustainably produced... But the biggest difference we found was between conventional and grass-fed beef. Just six percent of [grass-fed] samples contained superbugs..."

'We know that sustainable methods are better for the environment and more humane to animals. But our tests also show that these methods can produce ground beef that poses fewer public health risks... We suggest that you choose what's labeled 'grass-fed organic beef' whenever you can,' Rangan says."

Urvashi Rangan, executive director of the Center for Food Safety and Sustainability at Consumer Reports also noted that:[8](#)

"This study is significant, because it's among the largest scientific studies to show that sustainable methods of raising cattle can produce cleaner and safer ground beef."

Grass-Fed Beef Is Also Nutritionally Superior

Feeding animals a species-appropriate diet (which for cows means grazing on grass) profoundly improves the nutritional quality of their meat, which has been established by science. It also virtually eliminates toxins such as glyphosate and other pesticides, which is the other side of the healthy-diet equation. In 2009, a joint research project between the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Clemson University determined the numerous ways grass-fed beef beats grain-fed beef for your health. In a side-by-side comparison, they determined that grass-fed beef was superior in the following ways:

Higher in total omega-3s	Higher in the B-vitamins thiamin and riboflavin
A healthier ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids (1.65 vs. 4.84)	Higher in the minerals calcium, magnesium, and potassium
Higher in CLA (cis-9 trans-11), a potential cancer fighter	Higher in vitamin E (alpha-tocopherol)
Higher in vaccenic acid (which can be transformed into CLA)	Higher in beta-carotene

