Project Title: Prevalence of *Eschericia coli* O157:H7 in Feedlot Cattle at Slaughter Plants

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Layman's Summary

Hair and fecal samples from 240 cattle at four slaughter plants were collected immediately post-stunning. Fecal samples were positive for *E. coli* O157:H7 at a rate of 5.8% while hide samples were culture positive for *E. coli* O157:H7 at a rate of 1.7%. Fecal samples were also collected from holding pens from one of the slaughter plants and 15 out of 919 samples were positive (1.6%) for *E. coli* O157:H7. No *E. coli* O157:H7 was found at one of the slaughter plants and no cattle were positive for both hair and fecal samples. This suggests that fecal testing of pre-slaughter cattle is not dependable for determining which cattle carry the greatest potential for contaminating carcasses with *E. coli* O157:H7. Although hide incidence is at a lower rate, it has been shown to be a more common source of bacterial contamination. By providing a cleaner holding environment for cattle, it might be possible to minimize hair contamination regardless of fecal status for *E. coli* O157:H7.

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