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NF94-161 Yersinia enterocolitica

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Sumner, Susan S. and Albrecht, Julie A., "NF94-161 Yersinia enterocolitica" (1994). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 500.

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Yersinia enterocolitica

By Susan S. Sumner, Extension Food Microbiologist
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- The Disease:** *Yersinia enterocolitica* bacteria causes yersiniosis. Most commonly, people suffer various symptoms of gastro-enteritis, but more serious cases can lead to polyarthrits, septicemia and meningitis. Fatality from gastroenteritis is rare, and recovery, if there are no further complications, occurs within one or two days.
- The Organism:** Certain strains of the bacteria produce disease, but it appears that many of the strains are nonpathogenic and do not cause disease. *Y. enterocolitica* can grow at refrigerator temperatures, but grows best at room temperature. It is sensitive to heat and is destroyed by adequate cooking and by pasteurization of milk.
- Sources:** *Y. enterocolitica* is commonly found in a wide variety of animals, food and water sources. Pigs are the most important animal source. Food sources include raw milk, meat, poultry, shellfish, vegetables, and tofu.
- Control:** Post-pasteurization contamination of milk is the most frequent cause of foodborne outbreaks. Preventive measures in processing plants should include strict adherence to good manufacturing procedures for keeping perishable products such as tofu and milk clean and cold. The use of untreated water from any source in food manufacturing should be avoided.
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File NF161 under FOOD AND NUTRITION

F-16, Safety

Issued January 1994

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Elbert C. Dickey, Director of Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

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