

RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

• PROGRAM UPDATES AND HIGHLIGHTS•

COLOR AND OXIDATIVE PROPERTIES OF IRRADIATED BEEF

SITUATION:

Foodborne illness remains a serious problem. A report by the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology has estimated that foodborne diseases in the United States caused by pathogenic bacterial may cause as many as 9,000 deaths each year and 6.5 million to 33 million cases of diarrheal disease. The annual economic losses associated with foodborne disease may be as large as \$5 billion to \$6 billion.

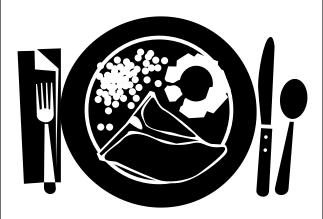
THE PROBLEM:

Meat and poultry products are primary sources of foodborne illness worldwide. Several highly publicized foodborne illness outbreaks associated with meat-based products have prompted the USDA to totally change its meat inspection system, relying for the first time on scientific information, especially microbiology. This new system imposes microbiological guidelines for meat processors, including steps to be taken for antimicrobial intervention that will meet government standards. Many types of interventions have been researched and utilized, with varying and inconsistent degrees of success in reducing associated pathogens. Industry and consumers are demanding better methods of reducing pathogens on meat and finished meat products.

THE RESEARCH:

The effectiveness of irradiation in controlling microorganisms in beef is well known, but additional studies have been necessary on the effects of low- to mediumdose irradiation when combined with freezing, precooking, and packaging on pork, ground beef, and beef muscle. K-State Research and Extension has conducted tests on the reaction of these meats to irradiation.

The findings concluded that irradiated beef responded extremely well when vacuumpacked. Bacterial counts remained low, and color and taste were unaffected.



THE IMPACT:

Irradiation is an economical way of safely treating meat products. Irradiation could provide an extra margin of safety from foodborne pathogens. If processors build irradiation facilities next to their processing or distribution centers, the costs could be as low as about 1 cent per pound. If the irradiation has to be contracted out, it could cost 5 cents to 7 cents per pound.

Domestic and international wholesale buyers, consumers, producers, and sellers face significant market pressures for safe meat products produced under well-controlled hygiene. All indications are that these market pressures will intensify.

*** RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas

MF-2313 January 1998

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Richard D. Wootton, Associate Director.

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File Code: Foods and Nutrition-5 SM 1-98-2000