

E. coli found near Spinach farm

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California health officials said the strain of E. coli bacteria that has killed three people and sickened 201 others has been found near a spinach farm.

The officials said the bacteria was found in creek water and in the intestines of a wild pig killed near a spinach farm in Monterey or San Benito county, the Los Angeles Times reported Friday.

The California Department of Health Services said the finding may help explain how the E. coli O157:H7 bacteria infected spinach leaves produced by Natural Selection Foods in San Juan Bautista. Kevin Reilly, deputy director of prevention services for the department, said wild pigs could have tracked the bacteria onto the farm or spread it to the vegetables through their own feces.

"There's clear evidence that wild pigs have access and do go onto the field," Reilly said. "Is that the ultimate means of contamination? Or is that one of the potential means, including water and (other) wildlife? We're still investigating that as we speak."

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