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INDUSTRY NEWS - AM

Consumer Reports turns scope on mechanical tenderization

By [Tom Johnston](#) on 5/14/2013



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After probing antibiotic-resistant bacteria in meat and poultry, *Consumer Reports* is now addressing concerns around mechanically tenderized beef.

In the June issue of the magazine, *Consumer Reports* warns consumers of the danger associated with mechanically tenderized beef, namely that blades or needles can push E. coli O157:H7 bacteria from the surface of steaks farther into the muscle where they're harder to kill.

"Because obvious marks aren't left by the small needles or blades used, you can't tell by looking at a piece of meat whether it has been mechanically


tenderized. And no labeling is required to let you know that it has and therefore must be cooked more thoroughly," the [article](#) states.

The article also notes that mechanically tenderized beef caused at least five E. coli O157:H7 outbreaks between 2003 and 2009, causing 174 illnesses, four of them fatal, citing the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

After warning the meat industry for years that it would enact stricter labeling requirements on mechanically tenderized beef, USDA has drafted [a rule](#) that would require such labeling. It has not yet been proposed and is currently under review at the Office of Management and Budget.

Under the proposed rule, processors that mechanically tenderize products such as steaks and roasts would have to decide (and indicate on labels) the temperature to which its products must be cooked to eliminate pathogens.

Consumer Reports has been taking an active look at the meat industry, most recently publishing a [study](#) linking antibiotic-resistant bacteria to antibiotics used in turkey production. Earlier this year, the magazine published a [survey](#) saying consumers want more antibiotic-free meat and poultry stocked in the local supermarkets. The survey was part of CR's "[Meat Without Drugs](#)" campaign.

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