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NEWS RELEASE

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Consumers Advised not to Eat Packaged Spinach Products

Idaho public health officials warn consumers not to eat any packaged spinach or packaged salads containing spinach until the source of a national *E. coli O157:H7* infection can be identified. There is a voluntary recall of bagged spinach products by Natural Selection Foods, which offers spinach products under the Earthbound Farm Organic label. Natural Selection Foods also packages spinach for other companies and bulk quantities for use by restaurants. Because of this, consumers are asked to not eat any packaged spinach, and to avoid spinach at restaurants unless they know it was not distributed pre-packaged.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified related *E. coli O157:H7* infections in 20 states involving 95 people as of Friday evening, including four from Idaho. The four Idaho infections were all women with one each from Ada and Canyon Counties, and two from Twin Falls County.

“It appears the spinach has been distributed nationally, so for safety’s sake we advise people not to eat any pre-packaged spinach or salads containing spinach until we can learn more,” says Dr. Christine Hahn, State Epidemiologist with the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare. State public health officials are urging people who develop diarrhea after eating raw spinach to call their doctor or local health district. Those who have bloody diarrhea or are particularly ill should seek medical attention and tell their doctors if they ate uncooked spinach.

E. coli O157:H7 is a foodborne infection that also can be passed from person-to-person unless ill persons wash their hands diligently after using the toilet. The infection often causes bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps, which usually go away in five to 10 days. However, patients in about 5 percent of cases suffer kidney failure.

An advisory to stores has been distributed, asking them to pull packaged spinach and packaged salad mixes containing spinach until the source of the infection can be identified.

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(Editors: For more information please contact Tom Shanahan at 334-0668, or 890-0161.)